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New York

President: Mr. Jeremić .... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Tanin (Afghanistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda item 41 (*continued*)

Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba

Report of the Secretary-General (A/67/118)

The Acting President: Before giving the floor to speakers in explanation of vote, may I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Joseph (Saint Lucia): Saint Lucia aligns itself with the statements made at the 35th meeting by the representatives of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, Chile on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, and Barbados on behalf of the Caribbean Community. We are pleased to have joined the overwhelming majority of Member States by voting in favour of the resolution to end the embargo against Cuba (resolution 67/4). Saint Lucia has consistently expressed its concern that such unilateral measures run counter to international law, the sovereignty of nations, free trade and the principles embodied in the Charter of the United Nations.

As a member of the Caribbean community, Saint Lucia has cooperated with Cuba in furtherance of the economic, social and educational advancement of the people of our region. Cuba continues to provide numerous scholarships for students in our region, who are studying various disciplines and will return to their homelands with much-needed skills to foster the development process.

Cuba's contribution in providing health care in underserved parts of the world is legendary. The training of doctors from developing countries also serves to help improve the overall health of the people of those countries. The embargo on Cuba only impedes those efforts. It is unhelpful as well as an anachronism in the twenty-first century.

Mr. Cancela (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): As in previous years, Uruguay voted in favour of resolution 67/4, introduced by the Cuban delegation, in the belief that the embargo against that country runs counter to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and violates the rules of international law, particularly the standards regulating international trade, which are binding on the members of the World Trade Organization.

Uruguay's position is in line with the broadest contextual definition of multilateralism, non-intervention and the peaceful settlement of disputes, all fundamental principles of our diplomacy. The situation also has an impact on another fundamental principle, that of the equality of States before the law. It is precisely because of that principle that our country rejects any unilateral

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or extraterritorial coercive measure that contravenes the rules of international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, of which the clearest current example is the unjust embargo imposed on the Republic of Cuba.

On various occasions — and I will reiterate it on this occasion — the Eastern Republic of Uruguay has stated its opposition to the economic, commercial and financial blockade of Cuba, with its severe effect on the well-being of the Cuban people. As a matter of principle, Uruguay rejects, and does not recognize in its national legislation, the extraterritorial enforcement of the domestic laws of other States. In that regard, we condemn the unilateral coercive measures imposed by the United States on Cuba, which are a form of pressure that poses an obstacle to dialogue and to the essential rapprochement between the parties that we hope to see resumed.

In voting in favour of the resolution, Uruguay reiterates its commitment to multilateralism as a legitimate instrument for settling disputes between States and as an effective approach for promoting international cooperation, human rights, security and understanding between peoples.

Mr. Shaanika (Namibia): I would like first to join other speakers before me in conveying my deepest sympathy and condolences to the people in countries affected by Hurricane Sandy, particularly the people of our host city, New York. My delegation aligns itself with the statements made at the 35th meeting by the Permanent Representatives of Cape Verde, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Algeria on behalf of the African Group, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China, respectively. I would like, however, to make some additional comments in explanation of our vote.

My delegation voted in favour of resolution 67/4 on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America on Cuba, because we believe that sovereign nations should live in peace with one another as good neighbours and embrace the principle of open trade without any threat or use of coercive measures. It is clear that the imposition of the blockade against Cuba is a coercive tool that is inconsistent with the practice of tolerance and that it, in fact, defies the promise enshrined in the United Nations Charter that all Member States should be able "to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours". In the same vein, the blockade policy does not foster the practice of tolerance or enhance peace between Cuba and the United States so that they may live as good neighbours, since it undermines that spirit of good-neighbourliness.

We do not condone the use of coercive measures as a tool to influence the policies of other sovereign and peace-loving countries. For that and other reasons, Namibia remains concerned about the promulgation and application of laws and measures that constitute an unjustifiable economic, commercial or financial blockade of any peaceful country. As we have observed today, the blockade policy has been overwhelmingly rejected by the States Members of the United Nations, because it not only inflicts pain on the people of Cuba, but also restricts their economic and social development.

Similarly, the blockade policy violates the basic human rights of the people of Cuba, because it causes irreparable damage to their economic, social and cultural way of life, key fundamentals to the pursuit of happiness. Namibia maintains the firm belief that all human rights, be they political, cultural or economic, are inseparable and therefore intertwined. Among those rights are the right to food, to better health, to education and the right of the people of any nation to develop their own country in the way they deem fit. The blockade denies the people of Cuba those fundamental human rights, just because they opted to pursue a different path to socioeconomic development.

Guided by our conviction and conscience that the blockade against Cuba is a denial of the rights I have just highlighted, Namibia voted in favour of the resolution and will continue to do so until the blockade is finally lifted. It is our hope that the United States will heed the voice of the international community expressed so clearly and loudly here today.

Mr. Khitchadeth (Lao People's Democratic Republic): I would first like to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, and to express to him my delegation's full support and solidarity. I would also like to take this opportunity to extend our deep condolences and sympathy to the Governments and peoples of all of the countries affected by Hurricane Sandy for the tragic loss of life and devastation it inflicted.

Let me begin by welcoming the report submitted by the Secretary-General (A/67/118) under agenda item

41. My delegation wishes to associate itself with the statements made by the Permanent Representatives of the Islamic Republic of Iran and Algeria on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 and China, respectively (see A/67/PV.35).

For more than four decades the innocent people of Cuba have continued to endure the misery resulting from the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America on their country. The embargo has also impeded their efforts to eliminate poverty, promote economic and social development and attain the Millennium Development Goals. It is disappointing to witness such unilateral and discriminatory commercial practices lingering in today's world of interdependence and multilateral cooperation among States. The blockade violates international law and is against the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations. It is a transgression of the right of a sovereign State to peace, development and security and is, in its essence and objectives, an act of unilateral aggression and a permanent threat to a country's stability.

In accordance with the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly, a Member State must neither promulgate nor enforce any law, regulation or measure the extraterritorial effects of which would jeopardize the sovereignty of other Member States, since every nation has the sovereign right to participate freely in the international financial and commercial systems.

Based on the universal principle of sovereign equality under the United Nations Charter and international law, no nation has the right to interfere in the internal affairs of others, despite their different sociopolitical systems. As a sovereign and independent nation, the Republic of Cuba has the right to choose its own political system, as well as the path of development that is most relevant to its specific conditions.

Last year, 186 Member States voted in favour of resolution 66/6, which is irrefutable proof that the demand for the lifting of the blockade has the recognition and support of the vast majority of the international community. The blockade policy is also increasingly rejected both within the United States and by the international community. The United States must lift it immediately and unconditionally.

The Lao People's Democratic Republic joins the majority of the States Member of the United Nations in reaffirming the urgent need to put an end to the economic, financial and commercial embargo against Cuba. That long-lasting blockade has already caused immeasurable material loss and economic damage to the Cuban people. As Members of the United Nations, we should do as much as we can to help Cuba to fully reclaim its legitimate right to integrate into the global economy. In that spirit, my delegation voted in favour of resolution 67/4.

Ms. Miguel (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines): Like the overwhelming majority of States, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines voted in favour of resolution 67/4. We align ourselves fully with the statements made earlier today on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Non-Aligned Movement, the Group of 77 and China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States.

We take the floor at this time to re-emphasize our deeply held conviction that the ongoing embargo is outmoded, ineffective and illegal. The time has long since passed for that archaic and punitive measure to be consigned to our history books as an unfortunate remnant of a bygone era. Previous versions of the resolution have been introduced in the past 20 sessions of the General Assembly and have enjoyed near-unanimous support for years. There is no other example of the international community speaking so overwhelmingly and so consistently. However, the embargo remains stubbornly in place, and its negative impacts have intensified, particularly in the wake of the ongoing global economic and financial crisis.

Saint Vincent and the Grenadines finds it regrettable that a number of vague General Assembly resolutions on various topics — resolutions that have enjoyed less enthusiastic support than this one — have been seized upon by various States to justify extreme interventionist actions. In contrast, an unambiguous expression of international will is not acted upon. The theories and explanations for the continuing enforcement of the embargo — from legislative inertia to the shallow political considerations of marginal political constituencies — are insufficient to legitimize the suffering that continues to be visited upon the Cuban people.

No country represented in this Hall has the right to tell the United States how to conduct its foreign policy, who its friends should be, or how to determine its national interests. Even if such a right existed, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would not presume to exercise it against our cherished friend and neighbour to the north. But every country in this Hall is obligated by the United Nations Charter to oppose instances where national foreign policy decisions become violations of international law or disregard the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in the domestic affairs of States.

Furthermore, in an era of economic globalization and international diplomatic engagement across the ideological spectrum, the embargo harkens back to an isolationist, confrontational era of naval blockades and military brinksmanship that have no place in our modern system of economic and political interaction.

Throughout its extended struggle with the effects of the embargo, Cuba has nonetheless remained a staunch and abiding partner in the development of our country, even in times of global hardship. Cuban universities have graduated over 250 Vincentian students and are currently playing host to 150 more, free of charge. Its surgeons have performed operations on over 3,000 Vincentian patients, without charging them a penny. Its doctors have brought quality medical care and expertise to the most remote areas of our country. Even as we speak, Cuban engineers, architects and workers are labouring alongside Vincentians in the construction of a modern hospital and our first international airport. Our appreciation cannot be overstated.

Furthermore, in a time of increasing regional integration and interaction, the Cuban economy and its markets and resources are a valuable component of our collective Caribbean development. To impede the development of Cuba through illegal extraterritorial measures is potentially to stunt the growth of Cuba's Caribbean neighbours. As we all grapple with the fallout of the global economic and financial crisis, the need to eliminate such developmental impediments is even more compelling.

None of the original architects of the embargo, nor the political principals that gave rise to it, remain in office today. Indeed, the embargo has been in existence for longer than Saint Vincent and the Grenadines has been an independent nation and predates the United Nations membership of every CARICOM State, with the exception of Haiti.

Let us not allow political cowardice or ideological straitjackets to perpetuate the continuation of the unjust and harmful embargo. We continue to hope for an evolution in the thinking and actions of our friends in the United States on the matter, and we remain unequivocal in our call for the removal of that developmental constraint on our Caribbean neighbour.

Mr. Sin Son Ho (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Allow me first to warmly welcome Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cuba, and acknowledge his presence in this important place on this particular occasion.

Allow me also to sincerely congratulate Cuba for the absolute majority support received this morning from the States Members of the United Nations (see A/67/PV.35). My delegation fully associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Algeria and Iran on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively, as well as those by other regional groups and speakers before my delegation.

Twenty-one years have passed since the General Assembly first began deliberating today's agenda item at its forty-sixth session. As all of us are very well aware, the United States has been enforcing the full-scale blockade against Cuba for more than 50 years for the purpose of overthrowing the Government of Cuba, which has caused enormous damage to the economic development and welfare of the Cuban people. The Cuban Government estimates that its people have suffered over $1 trillion in damages under the blockade.

The 1996 Helms-Burton Act extending the embargo to reach third countries trading with Cuba escalated the unilateral arbitrariness of the United States. The United States embargo against Cuba is a serious violation of the principles of self-determination, sovereign equality, non-interference in internal affairs and free trade stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations. The extrajudicial, unilateral coercive measures seeking to change the political, economic and social systems of other countries based on the values of a specific country can never be justified in any case.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea consistently opposes all forms of intervention and sanctions against sovereign States. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea delegation voted this morning in favour of resolution 67/4, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", and strongly urges the United States to immediately lift the embargo against Cuba, in conformity with the will of the overwhelming majority of the States Members of the United Nations.

The Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea reiterates its firm support for and solidarity with the righteous cause of the Cuban Government and people to safeguard their national sovereignty.

Mr. Lazarev (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): The delegation of the Republic of Belarus would like to welcome the presence of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, to our debate today.

We align ourselves with the statement delivered by the representative of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) at the 35th meeting.

Today the General Assembly has once again adopted a resolution (resolution 67/4) entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". Once again, the vast majority of Member States supported the resolution urging the United States to end the blockade. We would hope that the United States, which counts itself among the civilized States, will finally understand the irrationality and short-sightedness of the pressure it has continued to exert for more than half a century on Cuba.

Belarus rejects sanctions and unilateral enforcement measures. Such measures contravene the Charter and the principles of international law. Unilateral enforcement measures are a flagrant and massive extraterritorial violation of the human rights of the citizens of the countries against whom they are introduced.

Belarus, as a State that has itself experienced unilateral enforcement sanctions, has on many occasions indicated the need for more active steps by the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights aimed at persuading the United States and other countries to refrain from the wanton and crude tactic of applying political and economic pressure on sovereign States. It is for that reason that Belarus is calling for the establishment of the post of a special rapporteur to the Human Rights Council on the unacceptability of resorting to unilateral enforcement measures. That idea was supported at the recent sixteenth NAM Summit.

Belarus states here in the General Assembly, with a full sense of responsibility, that it is impossible to bend a sovereign State to one's will by blackmail, intimidation, threats or political and economic pressure. We therefore voted in favour of the resolution. We sincerely hope that the resolution and the appeal by the international community will be heeded by the United States and other States applying unilateral enforcement measures.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by expressing my country's support for the statements delivered at the 35th meeting by the representatives of Algeria, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and Iran, on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), respectively. I would like to welcome Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, and to assure him and his friendly country of our full support.

The principles of sovereign equality among States and non-interference in their internal affairs are the main foundations on which international law is built. For that very reason, the Charter of the United Nations and the Organization's decisions and resolutions have stressed, since its creation, the sanctity of those principles and the need for all Member States of the United Nations to respect them.

Since the unilateral embargo imposed by the United States against Cuba and the measures taken to tightly enforce it run counter to the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law governing relations among States, human rights, international humanitarian law and the rules of international trade, the embargo is de facto illegal, inhumane and incompatible with the standards set forth by the international community as the basis of relations among States. It also represents an unprecedented challenge to international law and to the credibility of the legality of unilateral American policies.

The embargo that has been in force against Cuba for more than 50 years has created a precedent that has been rejected as unilateral by States, as it lies outside the bounds of international law. It is also a cause of embarrassment for the United Nations. Moreover, the embargo has subjected Cuba to all forms of economic, political and social harm. It has entrenched the suffering of the Cuban people and put the United States in an embarrassingly direct opposition to the unanimous international opposition to the embargo. It has led to financial losses totalling $1 trillion.

The General Assembly has been discussing the item for over 20 consecutive years. It has adopted resolutions that have enjoyed overwhelming majority support. Many specialized political and regional organizations and agencies have adopted similar decisions. However, and regrettably, the economic, financial and trade embargo imposed on Cuba is still in effect as if nothing had happened. The fact that 188 States voted in favour of resolution 67/4 at the current session in itself confirms once again that Member States unanimously recognize the illegitimacy of the embargo imposed on Cuba and call for an end to it.

The Syrian Arab Republic confirms that unilateral economic measures, which have been imposed by the United States, the European Union and other States, represent a flagrant violation of the principles of international law. They are a hegemonic tool of the West, which is suffering from a superiority complex with regard to other countries and peoples; that tool serves only for oppression and economic and political coercion. Such measures aim at influencing the independence of national political decisions and at interfering in the internal affairs of Member States in a way that runs counter to the provisions of the Charter. It is also a manifestation of a policy of collective punishment that those States pursue.

Such illegitimate and unjust measures can only foment negative feelings towards the West. The majority of such measures have been imposed by Western States, particularly the United States of America and the States of the European Union. Such measures aim at weakening the Governments of other States Members of the United Nations or at bringing pressure to bear on those Governments in order to force them to change their national policies.

My country would like to reiterate its condemnation of the sanctions imposed by the United States, the European Union and other States. We wish to stress the toll and adverse effects that such illegitimate unilateral measures have taken on the life and prosperity of the Syrian people. Those unilateral illegitimate measures prevent Syrians from meeting their basic needs, in terms of access to medications, food, medical equipment, gas for household use, fuel for heating, agricultural needs, civil aviation transportation services and communications equipment.

In that context, we recall that the imposition of coercive unilateral measures is a violation of the relevant General Assembly resolutions, including resolution 66/186, entitled "Unilateral economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries", and resolution 66/156, entitled "Human rights and unilateral coercive measures", in which the General Assembly stressed its condemnation and rejection of unilateral economic measures, as it considered such measures to be an impediment to healthy trade relations among States and an obstruction to the full realization of the rights provided for in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights instruments. In that context, I would mention the right of individuals and peoples to development.

Such measures prevent the enjoyment by each and every individual of a living standard that guarantees the rights to health, prosperity and access to food, medical treatment, education and the necessary social services. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development has already stressed that the unilateral sanctions imposed on my country, Syria, have had a major impact on trade revenues, foreign exchange, shrinking productivity and work opportunities, and the deterioration of the economic and social prosperity of the population, particularly among middle- and low-income groups. We then see the parties that impose unilateral coercive measures on my people talking about how keen they are to protect human rights in Syria. He who commits arson cannot also be a firefighter; that is an act of political hypocrisy that must be rejected.

In accordance with its mandate, the General Assembly is called upon to take the necessary measures to put an end to the unilateral, unjust and hostile embargoes and economic sanctions policies that are being pursued by some States in violation of international law.

It is disadvantageous and injurious to the United States that Israel was one of only three States that voted against resolution 67/4. The overwhelming majority of Member States voted in favour. In that regard, my delegation would hope that all forms of embargo and unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States on Cuba and many other States, including my country, Syria, will be brought to an end. My country also hopes that the Israeli embargo and siege imposed on the Palestinian people will be lifted as well. We hope that the voice of the international community expressed by the General Assembly and other international institutions and organizations will be respected by the

United States of America and fully taken into account by its legislative institutions.

Some have, in fact, felt optimistic about the fact that the America president was re-elected for a second term and that United States intervention in the internal affairs of States might now abate. In the light of the foregoing, my country voted in favour of resolution 67/4.

The Acting President: I would like to remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes.

Mr. Emiliou (Cyprus): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union (EU). The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

The United States trade policy towards Cuba is fundamentally a bilateral issue. However, American legislation such as the Cuban Democracy Act of 1992 and the Helms-Burton Act of 1996 has extended the effects of the United States embargo to third-party countries. In the framework of the common commercial policy, the European Union has firmly and continuously opposed such extraterritorial measures. While we acknowledge the decision by the United States Government to lift restrictions on remittances and family travel to Cuba, we cannot accept that unilaterally imposed measures could impede our economic and commercial relations with Cuba.

To address the problem, in November 1996, the European Union Council of Ministers adopted a regulation and a joint action to protect the interests of natural legal persons residing in Europe against the consequences of the aforementioned Acts. Furthermore, at the summit between the European Union and the United States held in London in May 1998, a package was agreed that also sought to alleviate the problems caused by extraterritorial legislation. It covered waivers to Titles III and IV of the Helms-Burton Act, a commitment by the United States Government to resist future extraterritorial legislation of that kind, and an understanding regarding discipline to strengthen investment protection. It is urgent that the United States implement that agreement.

The European Union's policy towards Cuba was set out in a Common Position in 1996. Reaffirming the validity of that Common Position, in June 2008 the European Union lifted the restrictive measures imposed on Cuba in 2003. The dialogue with the authorities in Havana was resumed without preconditions and on a basis of reciprocity and non-discrimination. Five ministerial sessions of political dialogue have been held with the Cuban Government, addressing issues of common interest, including human rights, which is a question at the core of relations with all third countries, including Cuba. We reaffirm our determination to pursue a comprehensive results-oriented dialogue with the Cuban authorities, as well as with representatives of civil society and the peaceful pro-democracy opposition, in accordance with EU policies. We reiterate the right of Cuban citizens to decide their future independently.

We are encouraged by the release of all the political prisoners from the group of 75 imprisoned in 2003, together with other political prisoners. We reiterate our call on the Cuban Government to grant its citizens full, internationally recognized civil, political and economic rights and freedoms, including the freedoms of assembly and expression and free access to information; to ratify the United Nations International Covenants on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and, following the visit of the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, to extend invitations to other rapporteurs to visit Cuba.

Cuba's restrictions on rights and freedoms undermine and offset its achievements in health care and education. Similarly, Cuba's domestic economic policy seriously hampers its own economic development. In that context, we note the adoption by the Cuban Parliament in August 2011 of a package of economic and social reforms, and we expect them to be extended and implemented in a manner that will address the key concerns of the Cuban population. The economic, commercial, and financial embargo imposed by the United States contributes to the economic problems in Cuba, negatively affecting the living standards of the Cuban people. The lifting of the United States embargo would facilitate an opening up of Cuba's economy to the benefit of the Cuban people. Together, we again express our rejection of all unilateral measures directed against Cuba that are contrary to commonly accepted rules of international trade. We urge the Cuban authorities to bring about real improvements in all the areas mentioned.

Despite their continued concerns about and criticisms of the human rights situation in Cuba, the member States of the European Union voted unanimously in favour of resolution 67/4.

Ms. Nyamudeza (Zimbabwe): My delegation associates itself with the statements made at the 35th meeting by the representatives of Cape Verde, Algeria and Iran on behalf of the African Group, the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement, respectively. We are explaining our vote on resolution 67/4 not just out of solidarity with the people of the Republic of Cuba. We do it out of a sense of revulsion at the nature of the economic blockade, which is one of collective punishment. We deplore such sanctions for the harm they do to the people of Cuba and for their illegal application under international law.

We in Zimbabwe know well the effect of such economic punishment. Our country is enduring an economic blockade of similar effect and consequences. Such unilateral measures are evil in their nature; in our case, they are based on the racist premise that Africans should not be masters of their economic potential and should not enjoy the benefits that accrue from their endowment of natural resources without the mediation — nay, blackmail — of erstwhile colonizers and their fellow travellers. That is as abhorrent to us as is the unacceptable situation in which Cuba has found itself for some five decades.

We hope that those who are imposing the economic blockade on Cuba will take cognizance of the global opposition to their behaviour and that they will relent. The Cuban people should be left alone to shape their destiny without hindrance. We stand by them as does, clearly, a preponderant part of the world.

Mr. Bart (Saint Kitts and Nevis): Saint Kitts and Nevis would like to add its voice in support of the resolution on agenda item 41, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", and to give our reasons for voting in favour of resolution 67/4. My delegation associates itself with the statements made by the representatives of Barbados and Algeria on behalf of the Caribbean Community and the Group of 77 and China, respectively, and by the representative of Chile on behalf of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (see A/67/PV.35).

Over the years, Saint Kitts and Nevis has had good relations with the United States of America, and that country continues to be one of our closest and strongest partners. We respect the role that the United States has played in international relations and in the establishment and promotion of this very body. It is a global leader, and we acknowledge and remain grateful for its role in international affairs.

While recognizing recent concessions that have been made on the matter of the Cuban embargo, Saint Kitts and Nevis feels that they are not enough, and that much more should be done. As we have said before, in spite of our size we are prepared to signal wrongdoing and speak truth to power when a platform presents itself to do so. Today, we do the same in supporting and voting for the resolution.

This is an extremely important battle that goes to the core of international relations, sovereignty, non-intervention and the strengthened role of the United Nations in international affairs. For the past 21 years, Members have voted in favour of the resolution to end the embargo. This year, it continues to have the overwhelming support of the international community. Saint Kitts and Nevis, in its contribution to the Secretary-General's report on the matter (A/67/118), advised that we do not support or apply any laws or measures that restrict the free flow of international trade. We also advised that we do not apply laws with extraterritorial effect that impinge on the sovereignty of other States and the legitimate interests of entities or persons under their jurisdiction. That is a principled position adopted by Member States of this body.

Saint Kitts and Nevis feels very strongly, therefore, about bringing the embargo imposed on Cuba to an end. Cuba is a pan-Caribbean partner. It has aided in the development of the health-care systems and other areas in Saint Kitts and Nevis. There is much from which the international community has benefited, and can benefit, in cooperating with Cuba, just as Saint Kitts and Nevis has benefited.

It is disheartening that, although the resolutions calling for an end to the embargo have received overwhelming support from the international community for the past 21 consecutive years, the sanctions have been maintained. That unilateral initiative has stunted the growth of the Cuban people and has affected their social and economic development. The embargo is wrong on all levels, but none more so than humanitarian grounds.

We implore all Member States to respect the sanctity of the General Assembly and the decisions it takes. The continued failure to respect United Nations decisions continues to undermine multilateralism and the functioning of the United Nations system. It is my delegation's hope that the two countries, Cuba and the United States of America, can improve their relationship and embark on a process of partnership and cooperation. Saint Kitts and Nevis believes that the discontinuation of the embargo would go a long way towards improving relations and cooperation between the two countries. The issue is now no longer seen as a matter of merely bilateral interest, but of multilateral concern, we join the call of the international community on the United States to discontinue the embargo.

Mr. Thu (Myanmar): I am taking the floor to explain my delegation's position on resolution 67/4, which was just adopted by an overwhelming majority of Member States. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba, for his important statement.

As a member of the Non-Aligned Movement, Myanmar has steadfastly adhered to the principled position of the Movement in strongly opposing the use of unilateral trade and economic sanctions against some members of the Movement for the purpose of exerting political pressure. In fact, they are counterproductive and undermine the cause of human rights, particularly the right of peoples to development.

As a country confronted with similar unilateral sanctions for decades, Myanmar fully understands from its own experience the extent of the hardship and suffering caused by unilateral sanctions, which directly affect the people of the country, especially the vulnerable groups of women and children. We are thus sympathetic to the fact that the decades-long embargo imposed on Cuba has caused massive economic damage and hardship to the country and its people, preventing the country from fully developing its economic potential.

Therefore, my delegation has always taken the principled position of joining the international community every year in calling for an end to the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba in order to relieve the suffering of the people. Myanmar fully subscribes to the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter, especially the principle of the sovereign equality of nations. Adherence to those principles will contribute to the elimination of tension and confrontation between States. We therefore believe that the embargo and coercive measures should be replaced by dialogue and cooperation.

For those reasons, Myanmar has once again voted in favour of the resolution on the subject.

Mr. Awinador-Kanyirige (Ghana): Ghana aligns itself with the statements made on behalf of the African Group, the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77 plus China (see A/67/PV.35).

Ghana has never supported the imposition of the economic, commercial and financial embargo by the United States of America against Cuba. Ghana's position is informed by its commitment to its obligation to adhere to the United Nations Charter. It is also morally indefensible to deny the people of the sovereign State of Cuba the benefits derived from external trade. Ghana wishes to appeal to the United States Congress to heed the clarion call repeated over the past 22 years to help rectify the major hiccup in multilateralism that the embargo represents. Over the years, Cuba has demonstrated the spirit of multilateralism and international cooperation by playing host to thousands of students from Africa, who return to their respective countries to contribute to the development of their countries and global progress.

It is our hope that the issue of the embargo can be resolved more expeditiously to help us put it behind us and move forward together with the friendly peoples of Cuba and the United States of America.

Mr. Oyarzábal (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina's vote in favour of resolution 67/4 reflects our positive stance with respect to the elimination of the type of unilateral and illegitimate measure that the embargo represents. The Government of the Argentine Republic is committed to fully implementing the provisions of the resolution just adopted.

Argentina maintains a strong commitment to multilateralism as a legitimate instrument for resolving disputes between States and as the primary means of responding to the major challenges that require close cooperation between countries. The embargo against Cuba is contrary to international law and the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

Argentine legislation on the subject established, through Act No. 24,871 of 1997, that foreign legislation that seeks, through the imposition of an economic embargo or limits on investment in a given country, to have extraterritorial legal effects in order to bring about a change of Government in a country or to affect its right to self-determination, shall be absolutely inapplicable and devoid of legal effect. Moreover, it stipulated that foreign legislation that puts limits, through the imposition of an economic embargo, on investment in a given country or imposes restrictions on the free circulation of persons, services or goods, or seeks to have extraterritorial legal effects in order to bring about a change of Government in a country or to affect its right to self-determination, shall also be absolutely inapplicable and devoid of legal effect.

It is therefore unacceptable that, despite the reiterated and practically unanimous calls from the international community, in particular the General Assembly, for its elimination, the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba persists. We must eliminate such coercive unilateral measures, which cause irreparable harm to the well-being of peoples. Argentina joins others in rejecting the embargo and reiterates its stance against such measures and its determined support to Cuba's call to end the embargo.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): At the outset, allow me to congratulate the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba for the overwhelming majority support enjoyed by resolution 67/4, which was adopted this morning. We voted in favour of the resolution just adopted under agenda item 41 on the necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba. The views of the Islamic Republic of Iran on this important issue were articulated before the vote this morning in the statement delivered on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, in explaining our vote after the voting, I would like to state the following.

The unilateral embargo has an extended negative effect on companies and citizens from third countries, thereby violating their sovereign rights. The Islamic Republic of Iran reiterates its deep concern at the harmful impact on other countries resulting from the extraterritorial nature of the embargo, which we consider an added argument in favour of the prompt elimination of all unfounded sanctions.

The Assembly has repeatedly rejected the imposition of laws and regulations with extraterritorial impact and all other kinds of coercive economic measures that hurt the progress and prosperity of people all over the world. The Assembly has also called upon States to respect their obligations under the Charter of the United Nations and international law and to repeal and invalidate laws and measures that have extraterritorial effects on other States. The embargo, particularly through its extraterritorial effects, adversely affects the economic prosperity of the targeted countries. Sanctions increase commodity and energy prices and limit the access of States to markets, investment, technology and financial services, and even scientific, educational and cultural events, and thus contribute to global economic stagnation and hamper sound and healthy relations among nations. Examples of such embargoes are the measures imposed unilaterally against Cuba and Iran, which have brought extra pressure on the targeted countries.

It is unfortunate that, in spite of the General Assembly's yearly rejection of the United States embargo against Cuba, the embargo remains in full force. We see such enforcement as a violation of world opinion and an act that severely undermines multilateralism and the credibility of the United Nations itself. Multilateralism remains the best route for resolving disputes and guaranteeing the peaceful coexistence of States. The Islamic Republic of Iran has therefore supported all initiatives against embargoes as a tool to exert political and economic pressure on other States. We shall continue to support Cuba in its right to have access to global economic, commercial and financial exchanges in order to promote cooperation and development.

Our close ties and friendship with Cuba and the Cuban people lead us to vehemently oppose the blockade and emphasize the urgent need to put an end to such inhumane measures against Cuba and other developing countries and to fully implement the resolution just adopted (resolution 67/4).

Mr. Mashabane (South Africa): We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the people and the Government of Cuba on the adoption of resolution 67/4, "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba", with the support of almost all members of the General Assembly. The peoples of the world have today spoken loudly and in no uncertain terms against the grave injustice being committed against the people of Cuba. We would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba for his attendance on this historic occasion, when the General Assembly adopted this crucial resolution.

The question of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba has been and continues to be a persistent problem for the United Nations, despite many calls for its elimination. It is for that reason that South Africa would like to reiterate its support for the lifting of the United States embargo against Cuba. In doing so, South Africa supports the resolution that has just been adopted.

The continued imposition of the embargo by the United States of America against Cuba is a flagrant violation of the principles of the sovereign equality of States and of non-intervention and non-interference in domestic affairs. Furthermore, the blockade constitutes a violation of international law, and its imposition shows disregard for the noble principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

As a result of the laws and regulations that define the blockade, Cuba is unable to freely export and import products and services to or from the United States and cannot use United States dollars to carry out its international financial transactions or hold accounts in that currency in third countries' banks. Cuba is also not allowed to receive credits from international institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund or the Inter-American Development Bank. In addition, bilateral economic ties between Cuba and South Africa in particular, and other friendly nations in general, are further hampered and restricted by United States domestic law. That has led to the economic and social suffering of the Cuban civilian population, who bear the brunt of this injustice. This situation needs to end.

It is our well-considered view that the embargo violates the rights of the people of Cuba to socioeconomic development. It is therefore against that backdrop that South Africa has repeatedly joined the majority of countries in expressing opposition to all aspects of the blockade and the unilateral action by the United States.

South Africa is pleased to announce that an agreement in the matter of economic assistance for Cuba has been duly ratified by the National Assembly of South Africa. The Agreement and ratification documents have been submitted to the President for final ratification. It is expected that all formalities will be concluded by the end of 2012. That is a breakthrough in relations and cooperation and reaffirms South Africa's commitment and ongoing support for Cuba.

The international community recognizes Cuba's outstanding work in the areas of health, education and biotechnology in Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa and the underdeveloped world in particular and the world in general. A total of 321 South Africans who have graduated in Cuba are working as medical doctors in various South African hospitals, and a further 408 South African students are currently studying medicine in Cuba. Furthermore, the Extended Health Cooperation Agreement signed between the two parties on Africa Day, 25 May, in Pretoria, makes provision for, among other things, the training of an additional 1,000 South African students in Cuba, in an attempt to address the country's shortage of medical doctors. The embargo stifles that outstanding contribution to economic and social development and hinders the betterment of the lives of the poor.

South Africa therefore supports the lifting of the United States of America's embargo against Cuba, and we refrain from recognizing unilateral measures and laws of a coercive nature that defy the principles of the United Nations Charter and norms of international law. We remain grateful for the role that Cuba and its people played in our struggle against colonialism, oppression and apartheid in Africa.

Mr. Beck (Solomon Islands): Let me begin by associating myself with the statement delivered at the 35th meeting by the representatives of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and of Barbados, our fellow small island developing State, on behalf of the Caribbean Community, and all those who spoke in favour of resolution 67/4 today.

My delegation congratulates Cuba on the adoption of the resolution in the presence of Mr. Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cuba. As in previous years, the Solomon Islands voted in favour of the 21-year-old resolution, entitled "Necessity of ending the economic, commercial and financial embargo imposed by the United States of America against Cuba". We do so as the embargo continues to claim enormous losses, including loss of life, and to work against the principles, letter and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations.

The world annually makes an appeal to our friend and partner, the United States of America, to show some care and to have compassion when it comes to the severity of its prolonged sanctions against the people of Cuba. When sanctions defy international and humanitarian law, embargoes cause needless suffering, and an extraterritorial blockade restrains a country's development aspirations, which speaks of nothing short of a disharmonious relationship between two neighbours. In other words, the United States embargo is based on the concept that what is bad for Cuba is good for the United States of America.

A positive and engaging atmosphere is needed. In that connection, the United Nations, as an organization responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, is the rightful place to address such issues. So we welcome the resolution. The resolution stands for peace. It speaks for respect for good-neighbourly relations in principle, as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. It is in that regard that the Solomon Islands once again humbly requests the United States to reach out and give peace a chance.

The credibility of the Organization rests on the actions we take as members of this global institution. The lifting of the embargo, especially by a friend and partner with absolute power, will create the needed positive relationship. We, the Members of the United Nations, should not embrace multilateralism only when it suits the United States and discard it at our convenience; rather, we must honour and live up to our Charter responsibilities, as the people depend on it.

For more than 50 years the Cuban people have continued to stand tall against those difficult circumstances. We continue to recognize Cuba's resilience, friendship and solidarity as it continues to extend assistance to countries all over the world, including those in the Pacific and the Solomon Islands, helping us to achieve our Millennium Development Goals via the training of our medical students.

The suggestion made today by Cuba's Minister for Foreign Affairs (see A/67/PV.35) of submitting a draft agenda to its neighbour the United States, aimed at normalizing relations, is welcomed by the General Assembly. My delegation hopes that Cuba's outreach to the United States will be reciprocated by the United States through the unconditional lifting of the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba and the strengthening of multilateralism. We will continue to support the resolution as we move forward.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

One representative has asked to take the floor in exercise of the right of reply. May I remind him that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of Cuba.

Mr. Rodríguez Parrilla (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): Mr. Godard has continued to repeat the same story that he has recounted to the Assembly every year in seeking to uphold the Bush policy and now that of President Obama. That story will not become true simply through repetition. Only four of the paragraphs that he read out today were not an almost word-for-word repetition of the statement that was delivered last year (see A/66/PV.41). Mr. Godard repeats himself, but the blockade does not change. It is a remnant of the Cold War.

Mr. Godard lies in saying that the blockade exists out of respect for the Cuban people's right to freely determine their future. We are here because the United States Government has sought to impose its own designs on Cuba over the course of a century since 1901, when the United States imposed, through military occupation, the Platt Amendment, which allowed it to intervene in Cuba and occupy the Guantánamo naval base, which it continues to usurp. We are here because the Cuban people have defended their right to self-determination and independence with their own blood on the shores of Playa Girón and when faced with the threat of a nuclear holocaust in the October 1962 crisis or the missile crisis. Nobody believes that the United States Government is interested in the freedom of the Cuban people, after having dishonoured that freedom for half a century and lent its support to bloody dictatorships in Cuba and throughout the region. What it wishes to achieve in Cuba is a docile Government that supports its interests, and that is not going to happen.

The Cuban people gained their freedom on their own and have resolutely exercised their right to self-determination. They have demonstrated that will in the popular discourse of economic and social policies and in the elections under way. They nominate their own candidates; there is a massive turnout to vote for them and they revoke them when they choose. There are no special interests in Cuba, no corruption and no political manoeuvring. We do not waste $3 billion on a presidential or senatorial campaigns, and Cuba is not a plutocracy where the 1 per cent imposes its interests.

It would be worthwhile to listen to the people of the United States and respect their right to decide for themselves; to listen to the people who make up 90 per cent of the populace and not a handful of the wealthy who benefit from the current system; to listen to those who want to occupy Wall Street, rather than seeking to rescue the bankers who receive scandalous bonuses. They should stop brutally repressing the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations and put an end to the widespread arrests of peaceful demonstrators and the harassment of immigrants and minorities.

I repeat that the blockade is an act of genocide. I note that Mr. Godard did not deny that this time around. One would have to be cynical, if one were to refer to the human rights and the freedom, prosperity and well-being of the Cuban people after having listened to the examples that I mentioned concerning the harm the blockade has caused to the children of my country. They should stop wasting the money of their honourable workers, whose taxes are going to pay mercenaries and special agents, and eliminate the quadrennial budget of more than $196 billion to create alleged dissidents.

Mr. Godard, who was for years was the head of the Miami Office of the Coordinator of Cuban Affairs, is fully aware of what we are talking about. The United States Government lacks any moral authority to speak of human rights. Furthermore, in addition to a deplorable historic record of military aggressions and coups d'état, it has caused tens of thousands of disappearances, murders and acts of torture. It is responsible for tens, even hundreds of extrajudicial executions, acts of torture, abductions, secret flights, secret prisons and a concentration camp in Guantánamo.

If one believes that the economic blockade is necessary as a pretext, one should do away with the pretext and prove it. If the United States Government wishes to support Cuban agricultural purchases, then put an end to the discriminatory sale measures; allow private credit; accept the norms of international trade and authorize the use of vessels of other countries and do not penalize them for a six-month period; allow Cuban exports in exchange for the purchase of foodstuffs, which have fallen drastically as a result of the conditions that have been imposed by the United States Government upon producers and which have led our Cuban importers to seek out better markets; advocate a free flow of information; lift the blockade in the telecommunications sector; allow for a Cuban connection to the submarine cables in order to improve Internet access; put an end to illegal and subversive broadcasting on the radio and television; allow the purchase of United States software and the training of specialists; put an end to information technology restrictions and permit the use of those services that provide technological support but have been prohibited to date from export to Cuba.

If they wish for more exchanges and contact between the peoples, then they should respect the constitutional right and the freedom of United States citizens to travel to Cuba, as they are free to travel to any other country, even in times of war. They should stop imposing restrictions on the granting of licences and accept that walking and listening to Cuban music and dancing are not crimes and can be part of the activities offered by travel agencies.

If they wish to see better education for young people, then cooperation and exchange programmes should be authorized between universities, including grants in all realms of science and technology; an end should be put to the subversive and illegal use of training by the United States Interests Section in Havana; and the obstacles to international medical cooperation should be removed.

The representative of the United States lies when he affirms that his country is one of the leading donors of humanitarian aid to Cuba. He has used false figures, which include the millions of dollars that the United States Agency for International Development uses to subvert the constitutional order in my country, amounts for commercial licences that have never materialized, and the small but generous and greatly appreciated donations that non-governmental organizations, in defiance of the policies of their Government, send to Cuba, overcoming enormous obstacles. Cuban emigrants, like other emigrants, painstakingly save remittances from their hard work. That is not humanitarian aid provided by the United States Government.

Mr. Alan Gross was punished under due process for carrying out covert operations that were funded by the United States Government and made use of non-commercial technology against the Cuban constitutional order. Those acts were provided for and sanctioned under United States law. Mr. Godard lies when he says that Mr. Gross helped the Jewish community to gain access to the Internet. The United States Government is responsible for the situation of

Mr. Gross, and it could start by sitting down for a serious discussion of the case with the Cuban Government.

President Obama has the opportunity to make a difference and to go down in history as having modified a mistaken policy that has failed to work for more than 50 years and has caused irreparable human damage and massive violations of human rights. Perhaps then Mr. Godard could come back to the Assembly to say that something has truly changed.

The Acting President: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 41?

It was so decided.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I would like to make the following announcement concerning the work of the plenary. Consideration of agenda item 32, "The role of diamonds in fuelling conflict", originally scheduled for Thursday, 6 December, has been postponed to Monday, 17 December.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.

United Nations A/67/PV.37

General Assembly

Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

37th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 14 November 2012, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić .... (Serbia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 64

Report of the Human Rights Council

Report of the Human Rights Council (A/67/53 and Corr.1)

The Acting President: The addendum to the report of the Human Rights Council, covering the Council's twenty-first session, held from 10 to 28 September 2012, is currently available, in English only, on the Council's website. It will be circulated as document A/67/53/Add.1 in all languages as soon as the translations are completed.

In connection with this item, I would like to recall that the General Assembly, at its 2nd plenary meeting, on 21 September, decided to consider agenda item 64 in plenary meeting and in the Third Committee, pursuant to resolution 65/281 of 17 June 2011.

In accordance with resolution 65/281, I now give the floor to Her Excellency Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council.

Ms. Lasserre (Uruguay), President of the Human Rights Council (*spoke in Spanish*): It is a great honour for me to come before the Assembly today for the second time to present the annual report of the Human Rights Council (A/67/53). I would also like to congratulate the newly elected members of the Council and wish them success in fulfilling their mandate.

The year 2012 marks the sixth since the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the first year since the review of its working methods. Since then, the Council has dealt with human rights situations in various parts of the world, aiming at addressing the root causes of human rights violations and raising awareness of them in the context of the different crises. This has been done through successful building on interregional coalitions and thanks to the strong desire of all members to deal with human rights challenges, deteriorating situations and emergencies in a non-confrontational, consistent and coherent manner.

An example of that approach may be found in the consideration of the human rights situation in the Syrian Arab Republic, which has dominated much of the Council's attention this year. We have held two special sessions and one emergency debate and have adopted resolutions on this in every regular session of 2012, following interactive dialogues with the commission of inquiry. In its most recent resolution on Syria, 21/26, adopted in September at the twenty-first session, the Council decided to extend the mandate of the commission of inquiry on Syria and to strengthen its capacity. I have therefore appointed two additional members to the commission, and I hope that those additional appointments will be supported by strengthened support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for the commission of inquiry, including through the deployment of more staff on the ground.

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Please recycle

The Council also adopted resolutions on Eritrea, Belarus, Myanmar, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Islamic Republic of Iran and Mali, as well as on Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Libya, Côte d'Ivoire, Cambodia, the Sudan, South Sudan, Guinea, Somalia and Yemen. With the decision to appoint a new Rapporteur for Eritrea, the Council decided to transfer the communications that were being considered under the confidential complaint procedure. I wish to point out that the working methods of the complaint procedure have recently been improved, thanks to close cooperation between the working groups on communications and on situations.

The Council also discussed the long-standing human rights situation in the occupied Palestinian territories by, for example, establishing an international fact-finding mission to investigate the impact of the Israeli settlements on the human rights of the Palestinian people. The Council will consider the mission's report at its next session, in March.

I would like to emphasize that the full implementation of those and other important resolutions depends greatly on the availability of additional resources, which will, I hope, be approved by the Assembly.

During its past three regular sessions, the Council held, among other debates, a total of 16 panel discussions on subjects such as freedom of expression on the Internet; sexual orientation and gender identity; reprisals; people with HIV/AIDS or living with those with HIV/AIDS; minority rights; children's rights and the administration of justice; sport and the Olympic ideal; the promotion and protection of human rights in a multicultural context, including by combating xenophobia, discrimination and intolerance; legal remedies and reparations for women victims of violence; female human rights defenders; indigenous peoples' access to justice; and technical cooperation in the context of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). All those panels, having benefited from the experience and perspective of a wide range of relevant actors — including States, academics, civil society, United Nations institutions, international and regional organizations and communications media — favoured substantive and constructive discussions on subjects that at times might seem challenging or difficult to tackle.

In addition, the first high-level panel on mainstreaming a human rights perspective, held in February, in which senior officials of United Nations agencies participated, focused on the area of human rights, development and cooperation. We hope that holding this panel annually will contribute to improving awareness, coordination, synergies and technical cooperation among the various relevant stakeholders, so as to address human rights challenges and have a positive impact on development efforts.

The high-level panel on mainstreaming human rights within the United Nations system, to be held during the Council's February session, is likely to focus on human rights and the post-2015 development agenda, with special attention to education. The panel could also be a good opportunity to promote improvements on the basis of the assessment of progress, achievements and challenges in mainstreaming human rights in the United Nations system with regard to the current Millennium Development Goals. It could also provide a timely input for the High-level Panel of Eminent Persons established by the Secretary-General, and for the relevant special General Assembly event planned for next year. Issues relating to the right to development will therefore continue to have a prominent place in the Council's work.

With regard to special procedures, the Council has established new mandates, including two country mandates, namely, Special Rapporteurs on Belarus and Eritrea, and a thematic mandate, namely, the independent expert on human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. That brings the total number of mandates to 48.

In 2012, the Council heard for the first time the reports of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence, the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, and the Working Group on the issue of discrimination against women in law and in practice.

The high number of panels, together with the interactive dialogues and general debates, provide a forum for fruitful and focused discussion on various human rights challenges. However, we should avoid overloading the Council's programme of work. In 2012, the Council adopted a total of 99 resolutions, decisions and presidential statements. As already noted, the number of interregional initiatives continues to increase, affirming the Council's capacity to take action on important human rights issues. To name a few of the new cross-regional initiatives, I could mention the safety of journalists, business and human rights, corruption, and human rights and the environment. An ever-growing number of country-specific issues are also being dealt with in this way.

In the past year, the Council addressed a wide range of human rights issues relating to the freedom of expression and assembly, including by adopting several resolutions in that area on, inter alia, the safety of journalists, peaceful protests and human rights on the Internet. The Council also discussed issues related to the right to development, extreme poverty, the right to food, maternal mortality and the enjoyment of cultural rights, as well as the rights of vulnerable groups such as the elderly.

Many of the resolutions were adopted without a vote, again demonstrating the capacity of the Council to agree on issues related to the protection of those most in need. Resolution 19/8, adopted in March, on the freedom of religion and belief is of particular importance, emphasizing that freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression are interdependent, interrelated and mutually reinforcing.

In June, the Council held a constructive discussion on the line between freedom of expression and incitement to hatred and violence. It was a follow-up to the historic Human Rights Council resolution 16/18, adopted by consensus in March 2011, entitled "Combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence, and violence against persons based on religion or belief". In that resolution, the Council called on all States and other stakeholders to take concrete measures to foster a national culture of religious tolerance, peace and respect.

It should be pointed out that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has also been particularly active in that issue, organizing a series of expert regional workshops on incitement to national, racial or religious hatred, as reflected in international human rights law. The conclusions and recommendations stemming from those workshops will certainly help the Council make progress on that delicate issue.

The number of dignitaries addressing the Council during the high-level segment of the February-March session every year constantly increases, demonstrating the growing interest in the work of the Council as the main human rights body of the United Nations. That is further borne out by the increasing number of civil society representatives attending Council proceedings, as well as parallel events organized on its sidelines. There has been an average of almost 200 accredited non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and a hundred side events at each session. New features stemming from the outcome of the Human Rights Council review have been implemented to facilitate remote participation, through video messages, by national human rights institutions that comply with the Paris Principles and of NGOs accredited locally by NGOs with consultative status at the Economic and Social Council so that they can contribute to our work.

The active participation and contribution of civil society organizations are fundamental to the work of the Human Rights Council, making it a unique forum among other United Nations intergovernmental bodies. It is essential to the Council's credibility that human rights defenders and other civil society actors can contribute to the Council's work and its mechanisms in a free, open and safe environment that protects and promotes their own human rights.

In that context, we must deeply lament the increase in the number of reported cases of intimidation or threats, as well as physical attacks on and arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment of those who have cooperated with the United Nations, including the Council and its mechanisms. In line with the outcome of the Council's review, I personally have condemned intimidation measures and reprisals in the context or on the margins of the Council and Universal Periodic Review meetings. I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report on reprisals (A/HRC/21/18) and for sending a clear message of support in that connection when he personally addressed the Council in September, as well as during the panel discussion on that topic at that same session.

I would like to share a few remarks on the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review. As the Assembly knows, the first cycle ended with the review of 193 Member States by the Working Group on the UPR, which was a remarkable achievement of a truly universal mechanism. The UPR is certainly seen as a valuable tool for national dialogue and consideration of necessary actions. The second cycle, which began in May, is now considering the implementation of recommendations made in the past four years and the pending national challenges.

The second cycle will be crucial to consolidating the UPR as a significant tool in addressing the protection and promotion of human rights throughout the world in a non-confrontational, objective, depoliticized and constructive way. It is essential to ensure that the main achievements of the first cycle are preserved, in particular the 100 per cent record in terms of the presentation of reports by high-level delegations, which is a first in the United Nations system. I would like to appeal to all Member States to provide support for that valuable universal mechanism and to ensure that it remains comprehensive during the second cycle, in line with its legal foundations and its spirit.

In that regard, many of the participants here today have helped to ensure the presence of delegations coming from countries far from Geneva and without a permanent mission there. In addition, bilateral and regional cooperation has also been extended for the preparation of various national reports. That has been particularly difficult in some cases, and I would like to thank those delegations in particular for their endeavour. The Council has furthered its efforts to support the participation of least developed countries by establishing a Voluntary Technical Assistance Trust Fund to Support the Participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the work of the Council, which provides, inter alia, training and capacity-building.

Before I conclude, I would like to briefly mention the significant challenges facing the Human Rights Council in terms of resources required to continue its activities.

First, allow me to inform the Assembly that a task force has been set up to follow up on certain issues stemming from the outcome of the Council's review process, including the need to enhance secretariat services to the Council, accessibility to the Council's work for persons with disabilities, and the use of information technology. While most of the recommendations of the task force do not require additional resources for their implementation, I would like to emphasize in particular the need to strengthen conference services at the United Nations Office at Geneva. That could be done within existing resources by transferring existing vacant translator and editor posts from New York to Geneva. That is, indeed, most important in order to provide adequate conference services for the Universal Periodic Review, which has been underfunded since its work began, in 2008.

As I stated last year (see A/66/PV.49), reports are increasingly not being distributed in all official languages before their consideration. That is a serious impediment for meetings of bodies such as the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, which relies on the ability of the States to consult and review in advance the documentation for each State under review.

Other recommendations by the task force will require additional resources for their implementation. They deal with, inter alia, the need to ensure sustainable webcast coverage of Council meetings by strengthening the capacity of the Department of Public Information in Geneva, as well as by securing regular budget resources for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights for that purpose. Indeed, so far the Office has relied on voluntary contributions to provide that essential service for the Council. Bearing in mind that the Council has no more resources for summary records, it would be crucial to at least be able to secure regular budget resources for the webcast, as it remains the only official archive of the meetings of the Council and the Universal Periodic Review.

Another area where resources are also needed is accessibility of parliamentary or official documents, as well as other fundamental documents, for persons with disabilities.

Allow me now refer to other budgetary issues concerning the Council. This past year 29 resolutions and decisions or presidential declarations have been adopted. The ever-increasing number of special procedures and new mandates to be supported and/or implemented by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner carries significant resource implications. The new resource requirements of Human Rights Council mandates in 2012 — according to the preliminary estimate of the Office of the High Commissioner, which includes conference services — total over $12 million.

In response to urgent mandates created by the Council, the Secretary-General last year submitted proposals to the Assembly on financing unforeseen and extraordinary expenses arising from the Council's resolutions and decisions. However, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions recommended that the existing procedures for meeting those unforeseen and extraordinary expenses not related to peace and security be utilized. That means that the Secretary-General, and therefore the Council, must explain why additional requirements cannot be immediately absorbed within the approved existing resources. We hope, however, that despite that, the Council will still be able to fulfil one of its principal mandates, which is to respond in a timely manner to emerging human rights crises in the world.

Although I am fully aware of the current financial situation due to the crisis, I would like to rely on the cooperation and support of all Member States in ensuring that those issues are addressed, through the Fifth Committee, by positively considering the best options on how to tackle the funding of the new mandates that arise from the Council's resolutions and decisions, at the same time not forgetting the needs of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, particularly if we want it to deliver more technical cooperation in the face of the increasing requests from the field.

I have held the presidency since June 2011, and my term will end in December this year. I therefore wish to convey my commitment to a successful transition of the Council presidency. Similarly, I hope that the General Assembly will continue to provide its full and efficient support to the Human Rights Council during its seventh cycle, in 2013.

This morning, on behalf of my successor, I invited the President of the General Assembly to attend the opening of the twenty-second session of the Council, on 25 February 2013, and to commemorate on that occasion the twentieth anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to the observer of the European Union.

Mr. Vrailas (European Union): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia; the countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and potential candidates Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; as well as the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this declaration.

The European Union (EU) would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, for presenting the Human Rights Council's seventh annual report (A/67/53) to the General Assembly. We also appreciated the opportunity to hold an interactive dialogue with the Council President.

Since the establishment of the Human Rights Council, the European Union has been a strong supporter of this main United Nations human rights body. The Council has strengthened the ability of the United Nations to ensure that all persons are able to enjoy all human rights. We attach great importance to its credibility and effectiveness and will continue to make every effort to ensure that it is able to address situations of violations of human rights, including gross and systematic violations, and to respond promptly to human rights emergencies, but also to improve human rights standards worldwide through systematic work on various thematic issues.

In view of this, the European Union is very pleased to note that the Council has maintained its leadership in addressing human rights situations. In particular, the Council's prompt response to the crisis in the Syrian Arab Republic is highly important, including its holding several special sessions and an urgent debate, as well as extending the mandate of the commission of inquiry and establishing a mandate for a special rapporteur, once the commission's mandate has been completed. The Council has also demonstrated its commitment to providing technical assistance and capacity-building to the Governments of Libya, Yemen, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea, Afghanistan, Cambodia and South Sudan to promote human rights. The European Union hopes that the Council will continue to follow situations where technical assistance and capacity-building can make a difference and take action where necessary.

Serving as a member of the Council entails important responsibilities. Assembly resolution 60/251 provided that members elected to the Council shall uphold the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights. We encourage all to pay full attention to the human rights record and human rights commitments of States at the time of the election of members of the Human Rights Council and throughout their membership.

The European Union also attaches the greatest importance to the special procedures, one of the most vital functions of the Council. In order to allow the special procedures to perform their role, it is crucial that mandate holders are able to independently assess and draw the Council's attention to human rights issues and situations. The European Union welcomes the new mandates established on Belarus and Eritrea, given the deteriorating situation in those countries. We welcome the extension of the mandates of the Special Rapporteurs on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Burma/Myanmar and Iran, and the renewal of the mandates of the Independent Experts on the situation of human rights in Côte d'Ivoire, the Sudan, Somalia and Haiti.

Thematic special procedures play an equally outstanding role, through their research, country-specific visits and valuable contribution to the better understanding of the content of specific human rights and their contribution to the enhancement and realization of human rights standards. Among the many thematic special procedures, the European Union would like to highlight the new mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence.

The ability of mandate holders to undertake country visits and establish direct contact with the relevant governmental structures and other national and regional stakeholders, especially civil society, is of crucial importance. We regret the refusal of some Governments to cooperate with mandate holders. All European Union member States have extended a standing invitation to the special procedures, and the EU calls upon all United Nations Members to do likewise and to actively cooperate with them.

Over the years, the Council has also contributed to the further development and understanding of international norms and standards in the field of human rights. The Council is also mandated to monitor the implementation of international human rights law and standards. Only through objective monitoring and reporting can it identify the needs of victims and possible areas for capacity-building and technical assistance to States. We are happy that activities to strengthen international cooperation and develop capacity-building and technical measures remained strong areas for involvement in the Council.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a truly universal mechanism dealing with all human rights and applicable to all Member States without discrimination. Participation by all States in the first cycle is to the great credit of the process. We encourage all States to ensure that universal participation is maintained through the second cycle as well. Ultimately, the outcome of the Universal Periodic Review process depends not only on the quality of the recommendations, but also on the commitment to implement them. The European Union is committed to continuing to support countries in implementing their UPR recommendations.

The Human Rights Council also has an important role to play as a forum for dialogue and exchange of best practices and experiences on a wide range of thematic human rights issues and thus for the advancement of the human rights agenda. The European Union wishes in particular to highlight and welcome the following important developments.

First, enjoyment of human rights by women constituted a major theme at the Human Rights Council during the period under review. The Council strongly condemned all acts of violence against women and girls, and it should continue working on recommendations on how to create and strengthen linkages and synergies among the Council mechanisms and with other relevant intergovernmental processes. On the elimination of discrimination against women, the Council called on States to ensure full representation and full and equal participation in political, social and economic decision-making.

Secondly, the Council adopted guiding principles on extreme poverty and human rights as a useful tool for States in formulating and implementing poverty reduction and eradication policies. Thirdly, the Council continued its important work on the rights of the child, with a full-day annual panel discussion dedicated to the issue of administration of justice and an omnibus resolution on the rights of the child, presented jointly by the European Union and the Latin American and Caribbean Group. Fourthly, the Council addressed the human right to safe drinking water and sanitation, which is derived from the right to an adequate standard of living and inextricably related to the right to the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health, by adopting a resolution on the issue of financing.

During the reporting period, the Council also addressed human rights on the Internet and reaffirmed that the same rights that people have offline must also be protected online, in particular freedom of expression. We believe that this issue deserves continued monitoring.

The European Union reiterates its strong condemnation of acts of reprisal and intimidation of civil society representatives attending the Human Rights Council and cooperating with human rights mechanisms and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Civil society organizations and national human rights institutions bring extremely valuable contributions to the Council's work. Their ability to interact with the Council must be preserved.

In conclusion, let me reiterate the European Union's strong commitment to contributing to the work of the Human Rights Council and to further strengthening its role to contribute to the development of international human rights law, to systematically uphold and ensure the implementation of existing international norms and standards, and to promote the observance by all States of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. Sparber (Liechtenstein): We welcome President Dupuy Lasserre back to New York and thank her for her comprehensive report to the General Assembly on the work of the Human Rights Council (A/67/53).

In the past year, the Council has further consolidated its work and has again shown its readiness to address urgent and grave human rights violations. The Council has proved, better than other United Nations bodies, that it is a voice of accountability for the most serious human rights violations, in full accordance with its mandate.

We welcome the continuous engagement of the Council with regard to the situation in Syria and commend the commission of inquiry for its work, in particular in collecting evidence that can be used in judicial proceedings to hold to account those responsible for the gravest human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law.

Furthermore, we welcome the Council's call on the Sri Lankan Government to fulfil its relevant legal obligations and commitment to initiate credible and independent actions to ensure justice, equity, accountability and reconciliation for all Sri Lankans for the serious human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law in the final phase of the civil war.

We also welcome the consensus decisions of the Council on the human rights situations in Mali and Eritrea. Unfortunately, the Council did not take urgent action to the extent desirable with regard to the human rights situation in Bahrain.

We welcome the work undertaken by the Human Rights Council on the safety of journalists and on the promotion and protection of human rights in transitional justice. The Council thereby shows its ability to address current and emerging areas of concern to the international community with a view to strengthening safeguards in the promotion and protection of human rights, particularly in situations of fundamental societal and political change. We believe that in executing its mandate the Council should continue to be guided by the principles enshrined in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action unconditionally reaffirms the universal nature of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and commits States to universal respect for, and observance and protection of, all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all.

Against that background, we have followed with some concern the discussion within the Council on traditional values of humankind. While we understand that there might be added value for States to consider particular circumstances when complying with international human rights obligations, we are also convinced that such circumstances cannot be invoked to alter the fundamental entitlement of any human being to the full protection of her or his human rights — an entitlement that directly derives from her or his inherent dignity as a human being. We hope that the Council will heed those concerns in its future discussions on the issue.

The Human Rights Council has established itself as the central standing body of the United Nations to address all dimensions of human rights questions, including setting standards, implementation and emergency response. This year marks a particular moment in the Council's existence as one of its central instruments to promote and protect human rights — the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) — has entered its second cycle. It is also a time of particular challenges for the UPR. During its second cycle, the UPR must prove its validity in terms of concrete results and improvements in the promotion and protection of human rights around the globe.

Progress in the implementation of recommendations is essential to secure the legitimacy of the UPR among

States and civil society. States should make a particular effort to show that a review by their peers can directly benefit citizens of all parts of the world without distinction. The legitimacy of the UPR is grounded not least in the fact that every single State has been reviewed under the process during the first cycle. Preserving the UPR's universality must therefore be the highest priority for States, in particular of the members of the Council, as well as of the Presidents of the Council and the General Assembly and the Secretary-General. States have a collective responsibility in ensuring that the UPR remains a cornerstone of the United Nations human rights architecture.

Refusal to cooperate under the UPR is a direct challenge to the universal and equal applicability of agreements in the field of human rights. Refusal risks taking us back to an understanding that had been overcome, one that plagued the Council's precursor body, where political interests and selectivity often prevailed. We therefore hope that all States will continue to honour the principle of inclusive and transparent multilateralism by again submitting themselves under the UPR.

The review if the status of the Human Rights Council was accomplished just over a year ago by the General Assembly. Not all expectations have been met, but a number of positive achievements can be cited. The existing channels for funding the Council's urgent and extraordinary decisions seem to be open, in principle, to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, if not at all times. The consensus to preserve the current institutional relationship among the High Commissioner, the General Assembly and the Council has allowed for a pragmatic approach to improve information-sharing and cooperation within the agreed set-up.

Finally, the realignment of the Council's cycle seems to have benefited both the Council and the General Assembly, while a number of practical implications might still need to be addressed. At the very least, the realignment has allowed us to welcome the current President of the Council twice in New York. We look forward to a fruitful exchange with her in the Third Committee this afternoon.

Mr. Alhajeri (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly is discussing today one of the most important items on its agenda. I would like to thank the Human Rights Council for its report (A/67/53), which summarizes the important role that the Council plays in strengthening and defending human rights.

My country's delegation expresses its sincere thanks to the States members of the General Assembly for the trust they placed in the State of Kuwait by electing it to the Human Rights Council for the period from 2011 to 2013. We emphasize the commitment of the State of Kuwait, through its membership in that important body, to exerting its most sincere effort and to dedicating its full potential to strengthening and defending human rights principles and to support the work of the Human Rights Council in combating racism, extremism and discrimination. We also value the constructive activities carried out by Member States in that field.

The advancement of peoples and nations is measured by their respect for human rights. Furthermore, the Charter of the United Nations urges Member States to advance the principles of human rights and protect the fundamental freedoms of the individual. That requires us all to stand side by side in our effort to achieve those principles, since the humanitarian aspect must rise above all differences and thus no race, religion or sect may prevent an individual from obtaining all of his or her rights.

The State of Kuwait emphasizes its adherence to the principles of human rights. The Kuwaiti Constitution of 1962 is in harmony with the rules, organizations and conventions on human rights. The Constitution has consolidated those rights, such as the right to life and freedom of opinion and expression. Article 7 of the Constitution states that justice, freedom and equality are the pillars of society and that cooperation and compassion form the bonds linking all citizens. Article 29 provides that all people enjoy equal human dignity, with equal rights and duties before the law and without discrimination based on race, origin, language or religion.

The State of Kuwait believes in the role of civil society institutions and in freedom of the press and expression. It has legislated a number of relevant laws, such as laws no. 3/2006 and 61/2007. Both relate to regulating the work of various media outlets, including print, television and radio, in such a way as to guarantee a more open and democratic atmosphere, whereby the media can address any political, social and economic issues of Kuwaiti public affairs.

Article 31 of the Kuwaiti Constitution refers to the protection of human beings from torture, abuse and indignities. Such an atmosphere of freedom and openness will help to guarantee the creation of a healthy environment and thus generate dialogue exchange and attract visions and ideas from all walks of life. It will also ensure popular participation in expressing and influencing political decision-making in the State of Kuwait. That will in turn guarantee greater strength and stability in my country, leading to prosperity, advancement and innovation.

Article 35 of the Constitution states that freedom of religion and belief is absolute. The State of Kuwait has supported broader dissemination of the cultures of tolerance and understanding through dialogue. In that context, I am pleased to refer to the initiative of His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to establish the Universal Centrist Approach Centre, which has hosted several international conferences in support of necessary proposals to counter extremist thought. Furthermore, Government bodies have established programmes targeting all segments of the society with a view to promoting moderate and centrist thought throughout society.

In affirming the established principles of Kuwaiti foreign policy that emphasize strengthened international peace and security, rejection of violence and respect for human rights, my country provides numerous forms of humanitarian aid through governmental and non-governmental organizations and bodies, to all peoples, in its endeavours to strengthen human rights and human dignity. It has also increased annual voluntary contributions to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to support its efforts and its mission, as mandated by the Member States.

As we discuss the issue of human rights and the need to respect the humanity of the individual, we cannot but strongly condemn the oppressive Israeli practices and policies that persist in violating the most basic human rights of the unarmed Palestinian people in the occupied territories. We call on the international community to take up its responsibility to force Israel, the occupying Power, to abide by resolutions of international legitimacy, to cease its aggressive, tyrannical policies, and to respect international humanitarian law and the principles of human rights.

The State of Kuwait believes absolutely in the requirement to honour human rights. For its part, it will spare no effort to defend those rights. It stresses that point in its participation in all international forums, including United Nations bodies and governmental and non-governmental organizations relevant to human rights. We affirm the need for sincere cooperation in the sphere of human rights in working towards the greater benefit and security of our peoples, to which we all aspire.

Mr. León González (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): The Human Rights Council grew out of the need to confront the double standards, confrontation and political manipulation of its predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights. We must prevent a return in the Council to the harmful practices that plunged the Commission into disgrace. Cuba has clearly stated that it rejects the imposition of those practices. However, we are concerned about the current trend to exalt in the Council selectivity and double standards in its consideration of human rights situations when cooperation and respectful dialogue should guide its work.

Given that reality, the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is the only existing universal mechanism for making comprehensive assessments of the human rights situation in all countries. It is the main factor distinguishing the Council from the Commission. The UPR has proved itself to be a means for international cooperation on human rights, on the basis of constructive dialogue and respect for the principles of universality, objectivity, impartiality and non-selectivity.

Cuba participated energetically in the process of creating the Council. In addition, my country was an active and successful negotiator at every stage of the review process of the Council, in an effort to perfect and consolidate the work accomplished in its first five years.

However, as we have said, double standards have permeated the Council's work. On the one hand, many countries have emphasized the promotion of themes manipulated according to their own interests, such as country-specific resolutions, commissions of inquiry and fact-finding missions, despite the significant cost that some entail. On the other hand, those same countries block resolutions presented by developing States, claiming budgetary constraints and arguing that actions must be carried out within existing resources. That dichotomy was widely spoken of in the Human

Rights Council during the period covered by the report before us (A/67/53).

For Cuba, as long as an unjust and exclusionary international economic and political order persists, the Council should continue to speak out in favour of a democratic and equitable international order. As long as unilateral coercive measures are imposed and harsh blockades continue, such as the one Cuba has suffered under for more than 50 years, the Council should reject such practices and demand that they cease.

The special procedures of the Human Rights Council should be guided by respect for the principles of objectivity and impartiality and must respect the code of conduct that was adopted during the Council's institution-building process. The work of human rights treaty bodies should also follow similar guidelines. The Council must ensure that the recovery of the right to international solidarity is not postponed, with a view to tackling the serious challenges presented by serious economic, financial, environmental and social crises, as well as energy and nutrition crises, that plague the planet.

Faced with the tendency that the most developed countries have succeeded in imposing on the Human Rights Council, Cuba reiterates its willingness to cooperate with that body and with the human rights mechanisms of the United Nations system and its universal and non-discriminatory institutions. We affirm our openness to dialogue with all States, sustained through mutual respect, acceptance of equal sovereignty and recognition of the right of all peoples to choose their own political systems and institutions.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): I thank the President of the Human Rights Council for her report today and for her continued dedication to the Council.

The Human Rights Council is responsible for promoting universal respect for the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons. We would like to stress that it was established in order to address violations of human rights and to make recommendations thereon. Since its establishment, the Council has steadily and steadfastly established its track record in the course of actively responding to human rights violations

We particularly appreciate the fact that the Council has acted to address the serious violations of human rights in Syria during its regular sessions and also in four special sessions. Such actions include the establishment of an independent international commission of inquiry, the commission's special investigation into the atrocities in El-Houleh and the strengthening of the capacity of the commission. It was a conscious decision on the part of the Council to adopt several resolutions on the matter in order to send strong messages to the Syrian Government.

Furthermore, in a sign of progress, some country-specific resolutions were submitted to the Council by various Member States or regional groups, and, upon obtaining cross-regional support, several were adopted by consensus. The Government of Japan supports the use of such a mechanism of the Council to address and respond to human rights violations.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a truly innovative mechanism within the Council, which can effectively improve the human rights situations in all Member States through their voluntary follow-up actions. The second cycle of reviews started this year. It is important that we pay attention to the implementation of the accepted recommendations by each Member State from the first cycle. The second review of Japan was conducted on 31 October, and the draft report of the Working Group was adopted on 2 November. Japan will seriously examine the recommendations by Member States, and our response will be announced in the upcoming Human Rights Council session. The special procedures complement the UPR by addressing particularly serious human rights violations around the world. In that regard, each Member State should issue a standing invitation to the special procedures.

We highly appreciate the initiative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to strengthen the human rights treaty body system, and we also welcome the publication of her report on the matter. Japan attaches great importance to improving the efficiency of the working methods of the treaty bodies so that they can make the most of limited resources and effectively implement their mandates as specified in the treaties. It is also important to ensure the independence of the treaty bodies and their members. On the basis of the discussions in Geneva, Japan looks forward to engaging in the General Assembly process to craft reasonable and efficient working methods for the treaty bodies.

Let us remember that the Council was also established to realize the mainstreaming of human rights — that is, to integrate a human rights perspective into all activities of the United Nations. The role of the Third Committee of the General Assembly, as a universal body that includes all States Members of the United Nations, is also important for that purpose. We expect the Council and the Third Committee to fulfil their roles by making use of their respective advantages.

Japan was elected a member of the Human Rights Council for the 2013-2015 term at the election held in this Hall during the Assembly's 34th meeting, on 12 November. We appreciate the support and trust shown by Member States. Let me assure the Assembly that Japan is mindful of its great responsibilities. Japan will continue to conduct its diplomacy by promoting such universal values as human rights and democracy and will act for the protection and promotion of human rights in the international community.

Mr. De Léon Huerta (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): In 2005, the international community recognized the need to raise the level of treatment of human rights in our Organization by establishing a new body for strengthening the work of the United Nations in the promotion and protection of human rights around the world. Since then, the Human Rights Council has made progress in fulfilling its important mandate and is developing new tools to bring meaningful change to the lives of millions of people. The Council plays a fundamental role in promoting human rights, preventing new violations and developing guarantees for protection and non-recurrence. It has also been able to document serious violations of human rights in order to combat impunity.

A very relevant feature of the Council is the growing number of States that are ever more open to discussing the human rights challenges they face at national and regional levels. They are also more open to sharing their progress and successful experiences. In that context, numerous developing countries stand out. We hope that all States without exception will adopt a similar attitude. States must recognize that openness and dialogue with the Human Rights Council's mechanisms and cooperation can generate substantial improvement in the exercise of human rights in our countries and regions.

The Council has also shown significant progress in addressing the rights of the elderly and persons of African descent, universal recognition of the rights of migrants, including the right to work, promoting registration of births and preventing discrimination against women, to mention just a few issues.

Mexico is aware that there is much room for improvement in the way in which we address certain questions, in particular national situations, cooperation with special procedures and effective use of the limited existing resources. The institutional agreements on which the Council is based allows for constant evolution of its procedures and mechanisms.

We must recognize that, due to inertia, there is duplication of activities and, in general, we do not promote an adequate division of labour. The Third Committee has an important responsibility for preventing such duplication, promoting appropriate complementarity of efforts and seeking value added in the way we address issues. We must ask ourselves if we are providing due attention to and follow-up on the work of the roughly 47 human rights procedures that in recent weeks were subject to interactive dialogue with the Third Committee.

Given the pressing budgetary needs, it has become necessary to reflect on the way in which States can contribute to an increase in and efficient distribution of the resources on which the human rights machinery depends, as well as to the most efficient use of available resources. In that regard, we also wish to support the remarks to be made later this morning by the Turkish Ambassador on behalf of a large group of countries. Mexico will continue to promote a comprehensive and joint reflection on the topic with a view to achieving concrete results.

The President took the Chair.

The Council must continue to develop international standards for the promotion and protection of human rights, and not fall into unnecessary legislative inflation, the results of which will not necessarily guarantee adequate protection of human rights in the long term. We must promote greater coherence in the international normative framework.

Another institutional challenge for the Council is the need to broaden technical support in its broadest sense. Above all, the Council and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights must provide States with tools to create and consolidate efficient regulatory frameworks and implement public policies in favour of human rights.

The second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review presents a fine opportunity to promote plans for cooperation and appropriate follow-up on the recommendations made. The General Assembly and other bodies of the system must grant high priority to the recommendations of the Human Rights Council, which is the top body the Organization has to promote one of the pillars of the Organization and thus to encourage the incorporation of human rights in all activities of the United Nations. It is our ongoing responsibility to strengthen its efficacy.

Mr. Al Habib (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council for her presentation, which provided us with an overview of the developments and activities of the Council as well as of the challenges it is facing.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council was one of the most significant initiatives taken at the United Nations, not only because of its contribution to improving the United Nations human rights structure, but fundamentally because of its capacity and ability to change the politicized environment of confrontation that had characterized the former Commission on Human Rights, which ultimately gave place to the Human Rights Council as a forum for dialogue and cooperation.

The Human Rights Council is strongly expected to be a forum for dialogue, mutual understanding and cooperation in achieving the universal realization of human rights, taking into account the cultural and national particularities of different societies. To our great dismay, new concerted attempts are emerging to make the Council a mere political tool for the sake of political ambitions of a few countries. It is deplorable that despite the existence of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism in the Human Rights Council, certain countries still continue to submit country-specific resolutions in the Council and in the Third Committee of the General Assembly. It goes without saying that such resolutions are politically motivated exercises aimed at satisfying the political purposes and interests of their sponsors.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, along with the other developing countries, actively participated in and positively contributed to the reform processes of the United Nations human rights machinery, including those that led to the establishment of the Council, with a view to putting an end to a long-standing politicization and manipulation of the United Nations mechanism by a few countries.

With the successful performance of the first cycle of the UPR mechanism and the launch of the second cycle, it was agreed that the Universal Periodic Review constitutes a breakthrough in United Nations intergovernmental human rights activities. The rationale behind creating such a mechanism was to ensure universality, objectivity, non-selectivity and impartiality in the work of the Human Rights Council. The real advantage of the mechanism, in a logical setting, is to allow the human rights machinery to act beyond the control of the monopoly of a few in monitoring the human rights situations of all Member States.

However, the world is still witnessing attempts by a few countries that wish to impose their own views and interpretations on the application of certain internationally agreed concepts and standards. The Human Rights Council should deal with such attempts by designing innovative approaches.

The Islamic Republic of Iran has taken a genuine and long-term approach to safeguarding human rights by ensuring its full compliance with the relevant international commitments, while upholding the promotion of the principles enshrined in its Constitution. Our policy has continuously emphasized the significance of an interactive and cooperative approach to the promotion and protection of human rights, as stipulated in the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, as well as avoiding confrontation, double standards and politicization. Iran's firm commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights includes, inter alia, undertaking measures that lead to the further convergence of the values and principles held by various countries with different cultural, social and historical backgrounds with regard to the issue of human rights.

We welcome constructive cooperation with the United Nations human rights machinery. In their meeting with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during his recent visit to Tehran, Iranian officials expressed their readiness to engage constructively with the Secretary-General and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Iran has invited the High Commissioner to visit the country. Officials from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights made a preparatory visit in December 2011 so as to facilitate the United Nations High Commissioner's visit. Iran is ready to cooperate with United Nations special mechanisms that are comprehensive and include all Member States and not a particular group of States.

In that regard, we look forward to continuing our close cooperation with the Human Rights Council in realizing our shared objective of attaining greater global justice, equity and development through the enhancement of human rights for all.

Mr. Çevik (Turkey): We would like to make this cross-regional statement on behalf of a group of countries. The statement is identical to that delivered on behalf of 35 countries in Geneva during the most recent session of the Human Rights Council. The countries associated with the statement are Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Botswana, Chile, Côte d'Ivoire, France, Greece, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Maldives, Mexico, Monaco, Morocco, Nigeria, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, Romania, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Switzerland, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey and Uruguay.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) is experiencing new financial challenges. The High Commissioner recently indicated that the Office would have to cut its budget by 12 per cent in 2013, given its current financial situation. The financial shortcoming is partly a result of the increasing requests and need for the support of the Office, the increasing need for Secretariat support for the human rights treaty bodies and the unprecedented number of new and expanded mandates adopted by the Human Rights Council.. The financial challenge is complicated by OHCHR's reliance on voluntary contributions.

We all have an increasing interest in ensuring that the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, a leading institution in the promotion and protection of human rights in the United Nations system, can fulfil its mandate faced with the increasing demands on its services. The main aim should be to establish a more sustainable system for funding the OHCHR over the coming years in a manner that balances the various interests of States without infringing on the independence of the High Commissioner and her Office, which operates under the administrative direction and authority of the Secretary-General and the General Assembly.

With that in mind, we believe that United Nations Members should work to establish a more sustainable system for ensuring adequate resources for the Office of the High Commissioner by strengthening the funding of the Office, including through coordinated efforts in the Fifth Committee and other relevant United Nations bodies, such as the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, in order to secure a substantial strengthening of OHCHR's regular budget over the coming years and to ensure the timely funding of urgent mandates. It could also be achieved by supporting the High Commissioner and her Office in their efforts to strengthen efficiency and to prioritize, by ensuring the necessary space in that difficult exercise for the High Commissioner to manoeuvre in, and by continuing to provide voluntary contributions in order to secure a financial base for OHCHR activities with the help of non-earmarked contributions as far as possible. The current financial constraints should be borne in mind when mandating new activities.

We also support the High Commissioner for Human Rights and her Office in their efforts to strengthen communication regarding resource requirements and how they could be met, including the possible impact of different budget scenarios on the work of the Office. We support their continued efforts to develop dialogue with States in order to ensure transparency and easy access to information on sources and the allocation of funding to the Office, while preserving the independent role of the High Commissioner.

We believe that the High Commissioner and her Office should take a realistic and sustainable approach to budgeting and should look carefully at the work of the Office to strengthen efficiency and to ensure that OHCHR works in areas where it can add value and has a comparative advantage. The Office should continue to roll out the new performance monitoring system across all OHCHR presences in the field and the Geneva headquarters. That is important in order to measure impact and to identify clear and concrete data on how OHCHR is performing in different areas. In addition, they should expand the donor base and work to achieve as wide a geographical spread of donors as possible.

Mr. Guerber (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland welcomes the strengthening of the work of the Human Rights Council under the presidency of Ms. Lasserre. The presence of the Secretary-General at the Human Rights Council on 11 September was also a notable highlight.

Switzerland approves of the cross-regional approach, which is now becoming more common. That approach improves the effectiveness of the Human Rights Council and the participative and inclusive nature of the discussions in Geneva. That aspect has been further strengthened by the establishment of a fund to support the participation of less developed nations and of island States.

It is encouraging to note that new subjects have been introduced in the Council, notably gender orientation and sexual identity. However, the tendency that has sometimes been noted to tone down the language related to non-discrimination and gender equality is somewhat worrisome.

In the aftermath of the events in the Near East and North Africa and the citizen movements throughout the world, Switzerland is pleased to have put the subject of the protection of human rights during peaceful demonstrations on the Council's agenda. Discussion of the subject will resume at the Council's next session in March 2013. Switzerland is also pleased about the appointment of and the first report by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence (A/HRC/21/46) and that on human rights and the environment (A/HRC/19/34).

Switzerland is proud of the fact that it was examined for the second time in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review during the previous session of the Working Group. The interactive dialogue between Switzerland and the States was the culmination of national consultations organized at various phases of the national preparation for the review. More generally, cooperation among all States during the first cycle of the review represented one of the greatest successes of that mechanism. Switzerland calls for the continuation of that initiative, because it is important not to undermine the universal character of the review. In our view, the implementation of the second cycle of the review also took place under good conditions. We now need to place an emphasis on the follow-up of recommendations and implementation of the relevant measures.

As for the intergovernmental discussions on the strengthening of treaty bodies, Switzerland considers that the aim of the process is to make the present system more efficient, to eliminate duplication of effort and to enable the treaty bodies to fulfil their mandates more effectively, while at the same time guaranteeing their independence. As the co-facilitators stressed in their report to the President of the General Assembly, it is important to focus the discussion on specific issues, while bearing in mind the financing of the system of treaty bodies. Switzerland believes that long-term planning, working methods and the lack of adequate resources should be central elements of any solution.

Finally, with regard to the challenges in funding the activities of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Switzerland endorses the statement made today by the representative of Turkey. Despite the present economic and financial climate, Switzerland calls on Member States to increase the part of the regular budget earmarked for the Office of the High Commissioner and to maintain the level of their voluntary contributions. Switzerland welcomes the statement by the High Commissioner on the subject at the press conference of 18 October in Geneva on the occasion of the renewal of the mandate.

Mr. Orjiako (Nigeria): My delegation welcomes the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, and thanks her for her presentation of the report of the Council (A/67/53) to the Third Committee and the Assembly. Nigeria attaches great importance to the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. We are committed to upholding human rights, not just within our borders but in our region and across the world. We are committed to supporting the Human Rights Council as the principal body within the United Nations human rights machinery. We want to see the Council achieve its mandate, as set out in resolution 60/251. We have remained actively engaged with the Human Rights Council in the past six years, during which we actively served as a member.

Nigeria notes with satisfaction the commencement of the second cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, with the fourteenth session of the Working Group two weeks ago. Judging by the active and enthusiastic participation of the States so far reviewed under the second cycle, we believe that the cycle is off to a good start, and it is our hope that we shall see universal participation in it, just as we saw during the first cycle. Nigeria continues to view the review mechanism as a useful mechanism in the promotion and protection of human rights and indeed we look forward to our second national review in 2013 during the seventeenth session of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review.

The wide range of thematic issues addressed by the special procedures of the Human Rights Council indicates that the notion of human rights is taking on a broader dimension and is now being mainstreamed into deeper aspects of human development. We are pleased to note that the appointment of the mandate holders reflects equitable geographical representation and regional spread. We commend the mandate holders for the efforts that they have been putting into their work, and we urge them to continue to discharge their tasks impartially and in accordance with their mandate.

People across the world look to the Human Rights Council to promote and protect their human rights, and one way we can assure them that the Council is there to serve their interests is by maintaining the high level of access that non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have enjoyed in the Council. Nigeria is pleased with the participation of NGOs in the activities of the Human Rights Council and the freedom they have to express their views on issues under consideration at the sessions of the Council. We believe the Council's engagement with NGOs provides an avenue for the voice of ordinary men and women to be heard and for the cause of victims to be pleaded before that world body.

The considerable number of resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council during the current year is a reflection of the wide array of issues that the Council has had to deal with. However, it is a fact that resolutions come with programme budget implications, which create challenges of funding. Cognizant of the fact that human rights represent one of the key pillars of the United Nations architecture, Nigeria supports the call for the General Assembly to significantly strengthen funding for the work of the Council.

Finally, we wish to reaffirm our commitment to collaborate and cooperate with all States in order to advance the work of the Human Rights Council. As we leave the Council at the end of this year, we would like to send a clear message that our exit from that unique body shall not in any way diminish our interest in its activities or reduce our commitment to its noble ideals.

Mr. Hassan (Malaysia): My delegation warmly welcomes the presence of Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, the President of the Human Rights Council in the General Assembly and her presentation of the report of the Council (A/67/53).

Malaysia, together with the rest of the international community, has high expectations on the work of the Council. Events around the world, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa, have highlighted the magnitude of the work that is facing the Council. Now that the dust is beginning to settle, the citizens of the affected countries are starting to enjoy greater freedom in their lives. However, there is an awareness that there is more to be done. The nascent Governments, while trying not to repeat the missteps of the previous fallen leaders, are currently faced with the delicate task of juggling the call for progress and the need to retain support. Malaysia believes that the Council can play a prominent role in supporting those Governments, especially by guiding them towards a human rights standard that is acceptable to the international community.

Allow me to touch on a few matters relating to the Council. First, on the subject of the Universal Periodic Review, Malaysia is pleased to note the success of the first cycle of the review process. The review is a primary human rights mechanism, premised upon equal treatment of all countries. Malaysia wishes to report that it is in the process of preparing its report for the second review in June 2013. Consultations have been undertaken with Government agencies, and further discussions with civil society actors will also take place before the final report is prepared.

To ensure the full participation of all countries in the review process, Malaysia is of the view that the Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance, established by the Council in its resolution 6/17, should be strengthened and put to work to provide a source of financial and technical assistance to help countries. That would especially benefit the least developed countries and help them to implement the recommendations emanating from their reviews.

Secondly, my delegation notes the international role played in supporting the process of State-building and national reconciliation in various parts of the world. We wish to reiterate our view that such processes must be driven at the domestic level. It is important that any involvement of external parties must have the consent of the concerned States and should be based on the principles of cooperation and constructive dialogue.

Thirdly, Malaysia welcomes the Council's continued attention to the human rights situation inflicted by Israel on the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. We must never forget that the core issue for the Palestinians is their inalienable right to statehood. Malaysia strongly supports the legitimate right of the Palestinian people to an independent State of Palestine, based on the two-State solution, taking into account the security concerns of both parties. We urge the Council to continue to press the issue and to ensure that the Palestinians are afforded their basic rights as human beings, including their right to an independent State.

Fourthly, regarding the process of strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system, Malaysia appreciates the High Commissioner's initiative in conducting consultations with Member States on the subject. Nevertheless, we wish to emphasize that the process should be an intergovernmental one, in which involvement by the States parties in the various treaties in every stage is of paramount importance. We therefore look forward to the open-ended intergovernmental process that is taking place within the framework of the General Assembly to address the challenges pertaining to strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system.

We hope that the Council will carry on its good work in promoting and protecting human rights for all, and that it will not yield to the agendas promoted in certain quarters. The many achievements to date, which include the successful implementation of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism, put the Council in good stead in its promotion and protection of human rights for all. However, Malaysia believes that more can always be done to ensure the promotion and protection for the victims of human rights violations. Malaysia is committed to that end and will continue to strongly support the work of the Council.

Mr. Mahmoud (Egypt): I would like at the outset to express our appreciation for the statement by Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council, before the General Assembly, following her valuable statement in the general debate on the report of the Council (A/67/53) in the Third Committee, in accordance with resolution 65/281.

Since its establishment by resolution 60/251, the Human Rights Council has continuously improved its performance by unifying work standards and has contributed through its machinery to the promotion of universal respect for human rights. All Member States without exception have the duty to implement those mechanisms, which must be applied in a fair and equal manner on the basis of objectivity, impartiality and neutrality, devoid of double standards, politicization and selectivity.

The international community is continuously exerting and consolidating efforts to ensure respect for and protect all human rights, and seeking to restore the balance in international interests between economic, social and cultural rights, on the one hand, and civil and political rights on the other. Moreover, it strengthens our common efforts to combat all forms of discrimination, incitement to hatred and violence on the basis of race, sex, language or religion, including through the implementation of our commitments, in accordance with the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action, the outcome document of the Durban Review Conference and the political declaration that the General Assembly adopted by consensus during the tenth anniversary of the Durban Declaration in September 2011 (resolution 66/3). Despite those efforts, we are still facing challenges owing to the insistence of some countries on invoking the freedom of expression and opinion to justify provocative acts that incite hatred and violence on the basis of religion or belief and that have dangerous implications for international peace and security.

We have an obligation to strengthen and respect the institutional balance between the roles of the principal organs of the United Nations in addressing human rights issues, with a particular emphasis on economic, social and cultural dimensions. In doing so, we must reject the attempts of some to impose their values, concepts and perceptions, as well as the standards of their justice and legal systems, all the while promulgating certain controversial notions that do not take into account the diversity of the social, cultural, religious and legislative values of various nations.

It is therefore incumbent on us to reiterate our commitment not to politicize the Council and to reaffirm its central role in ensuring respect for all human rights and international humanitarian law for all Member States and peoples, without exception or discrimination, in particular in occupied territories, and most importantly, in Palestine. We have to fulfil our responsibility to ensure full compliance by Israel, the occupying Power, with all its international obligations, including its commitment to cooperate fully with the Council's resolutions and with the Special Rapporteur and the fact-finding missions mandated by the Human Rights Council to investigate gross violations of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories. In that regard, Egypt deplores Israel's decision to suspend its relation with the Human Rights Council. We consider that a dangerous precedent, which will, unless firmly dealt with, undermine the effective functioning of the Council and its mandate.

Strengthening the role of the Council requires enhancing dialogue and promoting constructive cooperation to ensure the effectiveness of the special procedures system. That is the shared responsibility of the mandate holders, the States and all other relevant parties, which must be based on the principles of transparency, impartiality and mutual cooperation, while ensuring full respect by the special procedures of the mandates and responsibilities established by the Human Rights Council and that Member States fulfil their obligation to cooperate within the respective mandates.

Finally, Egypt stresses the importance of strengthening the principles of transparency and accountability in the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, whether funded from the regular budget or from other sources. We request that the necessary financial resources to support the activities of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in implementing its mandate and to enable it to support and advise Member States, to follow up on the implementation of Council resolutions and to provide the necessary assistance to Member States in the field of capacity-building be sourced from the regular budget of the United Nations. Voluntary conditional funding should be avoided as far as possible. Assured funding will strengthen the role of the Office in supporting the work of the Council.

Mr. Cho Ki-joung (Republic of Korea) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, allow me to commend the Human Rights Council, under the presidency of Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre, for the quality of its work over the past year.

The Human Rights Council has rapidly met the urgent need with regard to human rights, particularly in Syria. The Council took the necessary decisions not only through its regular sessions but also by organizing a special session. It sent a clear message to the international community that any violation of human rights must be stopped immediately and responsibility must be apportioned. Such rapid response and effectiveness have further enhanced the primary role of the Human Rights Council as a guarantor of the protection and promotion of human rights.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Korea, I would like to warmly thank Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre for her tireless and lofty efforts as President of the Human Rights Council throughout her term of office. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea calls on all Governments and entities involved to respect all urgent requests of the international community through the Human Rights Council.

The Republic of Korea would also like to stress the crucial role of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) procedure. As was the case with the first cycle of the Review, the second cycle has begun very successfully. Better still, during the second cycle, which began this year, we have seen a number of developments.

First, the number of participating countries has increased considerably compared to the previous cycle. Secondly, there have been improvements with regard not only to the number of recommendations submitted, but also to their quality. Thirdly, the majority of delegations of those countries that have been evaluated have been headed by a leading official of the Ministry of Justice. That has allowed the messages of the international community to be transmitted directly to the minister responsible for implementing recommendations.

However, to ensure the full success of the UPR process, it is up to each State assessed to implement the recommendations made. While reaffirming its commitment to the UPR process, the Republic of Korea calls on the Governments concerned to implement all recommendations in order to ensure that there is a tangible improvement in human rights on the ground.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all Member States that have provided their valuable support to our country's candidature for election to the Human Rights Council. Through its promises and voluntary commitments, our Government has clearly demonstrated its resolute will to play a constructive role in promoting human rights nationally and internationally. All promises and commitments will be respected during its term of office. The Republic of Korea will spare no effort in undertaking the work of the Human Rights Council, while maintaining close relations with other members and observers of the Council and with civil society.

Ms. Hernando (Philippines): At the outset, allow me to thank the President for this opportunity to speak on the report of the Human Rights Council (A/67/53). This agenda item is of particular importance to the Philippines as a founding and current member of the Human Rights Council. My delegation also thanks

Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council, for presenting the Council's report to the Assembly.

Last year marked the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development, which unequivocally establishes development as a right and puts people at the centre of the development process. Yet many children, women and men continue to live in dire need of fulfilment of their entitlement to a life of dignity, freedom and equal opportunity. It is unfortunate that more than 60 years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which articulates our highest aspirations for freedom from fear and want and our commitment to protecting the sanctity and dignity of every human life, regardless of sex, race or creed. Poverty, disease, lack of shelter and illiteracy remain, affecting the realization of a wide range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, the Philippines is committed to continuing to support advancing discussions on the right to development with a view to its realization. We believe that the establishment of the Human Rights Council, aimed at strengthening the United Nations human rights machinery to ensure effective enjoyment by all of every human right — political, civil, economic, social or cultural, including the right to development — is but one of the manifestations of our continuing faith in and enduring commitment to the values and principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The reform process that led to the creation of the Human Rights Council stemmed from the need to elevate human rights to the same level as the pillars of peace, security and equitable economic development, on which the United Nations was founded. Development, peace and security and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing. It is only through the observance of and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms that we can truly attain peace and social progress.

Since its establishment in 2006, we note that the Human Rights Council has made reasonable progress in fulfilling its mandate, as set out in resolution 60/251. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR), with its intergovernmental and peer-review nature, remains an effective mechanism of the Council in ensuring that States fulfil their responsibility to respect and implement human rights and fundamental freedoms. It has spurred greater interest and attention to human rights at the national and international levels and has shown us that all countries, regardless of their level of development, share human rights challenges. We are optimistic that the UPR will continue to help the Council ensure respect for the principles of universality, objectivity and fairness and to institutionalize cooperative and constructive dialogue on human rights in a less politicized and non-selective manner.

In May, the Philippines presented its report for the second cycle of the UPR, which was adopted by the Council in September. My delegation values the UPR as a continuing process, not merely a venue for scheduled reporting and review. We are convinced that the UPR can bring about concrete positive changes in the treatment of human rights on the ground as it addresses human rights issues in a manner that takes into consideration the views of many sectors of society.

The Philippines believes that the primary goal of the Council is to help and to encourage all countries to build an enabling environment, both on the ground and internationally, and to better promote the human rights of their peoples in constructive cooperation with the international community and civil society. We are of the view that a consensual and cooperative approach in dealing with country situations can lead to a more practical and results-oriented outcome. The Council should therefore be a partner of all States and stakeholders in the promotion and protection of all human rights, with a strong focus on capacity-building and international cooperation. It must continue to work in a constructive manner, fostering dialogue and cooperation and engaging in meaningful interaction with States and all stakeholders at the national and international level.

Mr. Balé (Congo), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The special procedures play an important role in protecting and promoting human rights. The independence of mandate holders is vital to their work but, as we have repeatedly stressed in the past, it must always be balanced with important considerations, such as professionalism, integrity, efficiency and effectiveness.

As a founding and current member of the Council, the Philippines endeavours to contribute to the efficient and effective work of the Council by working with all States and stakeholders in a constructive manner, fostering dialogue and cooperation and focusing on the importance of bridging national, regional and international human rights goals, standards and strategies. The Philippines is the main sponsor of initiatives in the Council on human rights and extreme poverty and on combating trafficking in persons, especially women and children. It traditionally sponsors initiatives on the protection of the human rights of vulnerable groups, such as migrants, women, indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities, and is a member of the cross-regional Platform for Human Rights Education and Training.

Sensitive to the current and emerging human rights challenges and aware that the effective realization of human rights is vital to alleviating poverty and creating a better quality of life for all, my delegation reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights.

Mr. Ntwaagae (Botswana): Botswana warmly welcomes the President of the Human Rights Council to the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly and thanks her for the comprehensive report that she presented to the Assembly (A/67/53).

My delegation associates itself with the statement made earlier in the meeting by the representative of Turkey on behalf of the cross-regional group on the financial challenges of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Botswana is fully committed to the promotion and protection of human rights, both at home and abroad. We attach great importance to the work of the Council as we believe that it continues to make a positive impact on Member States in fulfilling their human rights obligations. However, we believe that much more remains to be done.

Botswana commends the Council for the work that it has achieved at the recently concluded session. The decisions taken on various thematic and country mandates will go a long way in assisting the countries concerned to address the challenges that they face in the protection and promotion of human rights.

However, we are concerned about the situation of human rights violations in a number of countries that are on the Council's agenda, in particular the situation in Syria. We further call on the Security Council to take the necessary measures to compel the Government of Syria to end the impunity and violation of the fundamental rights and freedoms of the Syrian people. The extension of the mandate of the independent international commission of inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic is also a commendable decision of the Council. We hope that the concerned parties will cooperate with the commission and allow it to successfully carry out its mandate.

We have taken note of the challenges and constraints of the Office of the High Commissioner, particularly in the past year. In that regard, Botswana has continued to engage actively in the work of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. We have positively engaged with various special procedures mandate holders in support of their work despite the challenges that they face in carrying out their mandates.

We also share the High Commissioner's concerns about resource constraints and the increasing workload of the Human Rights Council. Our abiding faith in and commitment to supporting the Office of the High Commissioner is demonstrated by our response to calls for human rights appeals, both political and financial, and to the work of the special procedures and mandates that emanate from the Human Rights Council.

My delegation is also pleased by the work carried out under the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. We take particular note of the report of the Special Rapporteur on the use of children in armed conflicts and reiterate our support to guard against impunity and the violation of children's rights in all situations, including armed conflict.

We also recognize the valuable role and the contribution of the human rights treaty bodies to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Their effective functioning remains critical. We are confident that the ongoing intergovernmental process on the strengthening of the human rights treaty body system will enhance efficiency in the financing and working methods of such bodies and will complement efforts to promote the development agenda of the Human Rights Council.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to reiterate Botswana's support for the work of the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms. We hope to achieve our aspirations in that regard.

Mr. Lukiyantsev (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): At the outset, allow me to thank Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights

Council, for presenting the report on the work of the Council (A/67/53).

Today, it can be confidently said that in the period since the Council's establishment, that body has become one of the key elements of the international human rights architecture called on to help the development of constructive inter-State cooperation in that area. The Council has specific qualities that distinguish it positively from its predecessor, the Human Rights Commission.

However, a worrying trend increasingly seen in the work of the Human Rights Council, in particular in recent years, is emerging. Unfortunately, its work continues to be characterized by the polarization of various groups of States, making it difficult to hold a meaningful and constructive discussion of human rights issues. There is concern about the continuing practice of many States and groups of countries to use human rights as an instrument of political pressure, imposing foreign value systems without taking the national historical, economic, and sociopolitical characteristics of States into account.

We continue to see attempts to divide States into two categories — the bad and the good, the students and the examiners — undermining the intergovernmental nature of the Council. Such an approach fundamentally contradicts the initial purpose of the Council as a body created to develop dialogue and cooperation. The Council must work in the interests of all Member States without exception and not give preference to any one nation's individual needs.

In that regard, we would like to once again draw attention to the basic principles of the Human Rights Council: universality, impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity. We are firmly convinced that unless those principles are respected, we cannot foster genuine, constructive, mutually respectful international dialogue and cooperation to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the Council's work as a whole will be doomed to fail. We must recognize the fact that the primary responsibility for promoting and protecting human rights lies with States themselves and that the basic task of the international community resides in providing them with technical, results-oriented assistance.

One of the most important functions of the Council, pursuant to the provisions of resolution 60/251, is to conduct the Universal Periodic Review of the human rights situations in Member States. Russia supported the creation of that procedure in the hope that holding such a review on the basis of equality and mutual respect would help to reduce confrontation in inter-State discussions of human rights. We are convinced that in the future the Universal Periodic Review must to a great extent replace the discredited practice of lopsided and politicized resolutions on the human rights situations in individual countries. The review procedure has considerable potential, but that can be realized only if there is genuine universality, without exception or exemption from the general rules.

One of the most important instruments that the Council can use to implement its mandate is the system of special procedures, which is a legacy of the Human Rights Commission. Unfortunately, along with some benefits of the special procedures system, it has shortcomings, which have been justly criticized. It is important that the future functioning of human rights mechanisms move towards depoliticization. That can be guaranteed by unswerving respect in the special procedures, a principle adopted by Member States at the sixty-second session in resolution 62/219, setting out the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council.

On the subject of cooperation between the Human Rights Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights, we believe it to be of fundamental importance to strictly follow the provisions of resolutions 48/141 and 60/251, which clearly define the place and role of the High Commissioner and the Office of the High Commissioner in the United Nations human rights structure. We believe that the work of the Office of the High Commissioner should focus on enhancing dialogue and cooperation with States in order to provide them with assistance in guaranteeing human rights and freedoms.

In that regard, we suggest that such important mechanisms as the biennial Strategic Management Plan of the Office of the High Commissioner should be reviewed by the Human Rights Council before being presented to the General Assembly. However, we should have a genuine dialogue among Member States rather than a mere mechanism for collecting views, as was done this year. That would allow the High Commissioner to get a clearer picture of the current needs of various States in promoting and protecting human rights, and the Office could thereby design its work in a more targeted way.

In order to ensure that human rights become a real element of everyone's lives, it is important not only to recognize their juridical definition but to make a fresh consideration of the moral dimension. That dimension is first and foremost reflected in traditional human values that have developed in our societies over millennia and are reflected in religions, cultures and customs. I refer to such traditional values as dignity, responsibility, freedom, work, the family and mutual respect. Such moral principles must form the foundation of social life and become the cement that binds nations, peoples and ethnic groups. We firmly believe that if traditional values are respected in the relationship between human rights and traditional human values, they will bolster respect for human rights and their universal enjoyment. We believe that an excellent starting point on this theme was the discussion initiated by Russia in the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): We welcome the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Laura Lasserre, and reaffirm our determination to continue our constructive cooperation with her, working to guarantee that all human rights are addressed in a fair, impartial, equitable and non-selective way, free of the pitfalls and ploys of politicization and double standards that undermine many of our accomplishments here in New York and in Geneva.

My country, as is well known, participated actively in creating the Human Rights Council in Geneva and in the consensual activities that led to its formation. Therefore, everything pertaining to human rights lies at the heart of Syrian foreign policy.

We have read with deep interest the Council's report (A/67/53), which covers extremely important topics, especially information about violations of human rights in the occupied Arab territories, the Syrian Golan and the Palestinian territories. The Syrian Golan has been under an unjust Israeli occupation for 45 years, and despite the Human Rights Council's demands that Israel, the occupying Power — to use United Nations language — implement the resolutions of all the bodies and agencies of the United Nations, including of course the Human Rights Council, Israel continues to flout said resolutions. The Israelis continue to commit war crimes and crimes against humanity and to openly boast of their crimes, unhindered by any punishment or accountability, while international public opinion continues to ponder seriously why it is that they are exempt from prosecution and accountability.

We can only express our concern about the efforts of some parties to turn the Human Rights Council into a private and prefabricated sector that works within narrow political parameters that serve the agendas of some influential States and contradict the spirit and mandate of the Human Rights Council itself. We say this because some, unfortunately, have succeeded in turning back the clock to the time of the Human Rights Commission and are once again politicizing the work of the Human Rights Council.

This was made abundantly clear when resolutions were adopted in which the Council condemned the violations of human rights in some developing countries but continued to ignore and dismiss mechanisms to address human rights situations and their violations in so-called developed States. In those States, racism is rampant, as are xenophobia, racial discrimination, discrimination against indigenous people and immigrants, and inhumane and abusive treatment of detainees and refugees. These countries have militarily invaded sovereign States Members of the United Nations and, more important, violated their right to development by adopting unilateral, coercive economic measures against the peoples of developing countries. The list goes on.

Unfortunately, some Western States have adopted a double standard in their understanding of terrorism. There is the terrorism that others perpetrate, which must be fought by all means and methods. Some States have even gone to extremes in combating such terrorism and stressing the need to uproot and condemn it. That is, in their view, the first kind of terrorism; the second is the kind that those Western States themselves perpetrate. That is acceptable terrorism, which can be committed without drawing any criticism. On the contrary, it can be defended. This is a dangerous precedent and a stain on the record of the Human Rights Council and on the logic of international relations.

I would like to provide a real example from Egypt in 1906. In a small village called Denishwei, soldiers and officers from the British occupation at the time wanted to go on a hunting trip. They violated the sanctity of women in that village, whose people rose in protest against those unwanted visitors. Many people were killed, including one British officer. The result was that the British occupation organized an impromptu field court in the village of Denishwei and sentenced dozens of its residents to death. That is why it is known as the massacre of Denishwei. A well-known Egyptian poet named Hafez Ibrahim was a contemporary of that massacre. He described the massacre in a line of poetry that says that killing an individual, even in a jungle, is an unforgivable crime, but killing peaceful people is a controversial issue.

The four resolutions pertaining to Syria and mentioned in the report of the Human Rights Council (A/HRC/RES/19/1, A/HRC/RES/19/22, A/HRC/RES/20/22 and A/HRC/S-19/2) were based on unilateral media reports. The texts of those resolutions were drafted using misleading and hostile terms and language that were without precedent in their hatefulness towards the Syrian people and Government. They condemn only one side — the Syrian Government. Not in a single paragraph do they demand an end to violence or to the disarming of the armed terrorist groups, or that a national dialogue be launched to resolve the crisis peacefully on the basis of the six-point plan, the Geneva declaration and the Brahimi commission.

These resolutions go even further. Their sponsors, who claim to defend the human rights of the Syrian people, have neglected to mention the deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation in Syria, which is a result of the coercive unilateral economic measures that have been imposed on the Syrian people by the States members of the European Union, the United States and, unfortunately, some Arab States. This occurred despite the fact that the report of the independent international commission of inquiry (A/HRC/21/50), which was established by the Human Rights Council itself, noted the impact of the economic measures on the livelihoods of the Syrian people. Needless to say, these coercive measures threaten the sovereignty and independence of States and flagrantly violate the Charter of the United and the principles of human rights.

I can only say that it is regrettable and shameful for the League of Arab States and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to have been the first to impose these inhumane sanctions on the Syrian people, in direct violation of their human rights. It is also shameful for many of the rich countries who are members of those two organizations not to offer a single dollar in assistance to the Syrian people, while they channel millions of dollars to terrorist mercenaries and Al-Qaida elements to enable them to shed the blood of innocent Syrians and destroy the Syrian State.

Recently, *The Telegraph*, a British newspaper, published an important article on a British doctor named Shajul Islam. He had decided to go and wage jihad in Syria, so he left his career as a physician in Britain and went to Syria to wage jihad. The British newspaper described this man as a doctor by day and a terrorist by night in Syria. Yet there are those who still insist that there is no terrorism in Syria, no armed groups in Syria and no ships arriving from Libya laden with weapons and endowed with Qatari funding and operational facilities from Turkey, to be used to kill the Syrian people.

My country is experiencing a humanitarian crisis, the reasons for which are well known. Terrorism has struck my country because of the systematic violations perpetrated by members of terrorist armed groups that are funded and backed from outside. The foreign backing of these armed groups and their vital role in what is happening in Syria have been clearly proved, and evidence thereof is now in the hands of the Security Council, the Secretary-General and the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

My country's Government has offered every form of cooperation with a view to arriving at a solution to the humanitarian crisis and the deteriorating economic conditions. Damascus has received and continues to receive delegations from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the International Committee of the Red Cross and many other international delegations, whether political, spiritual or media-related.

My country has also accepted the revised response plan and granted permission to many non-governmental organizations to participate in the plan in order to respond to humanitarian needs. We also guarantee entry visas to humanitarian aid workers and have issued licenses and eased all bureaucratic measures to allow OCHA to conduct field visits to many areas inside Syria without delay. As Council members and the President of the Human Rights Council know, we have participated constructively in the six meetings of the Syrian Humanitarian Forum, held in Geneva.

Despite all that, some nations that are known to support terrorism in my country continue to try to demonize the Syrian Government and to portray it as a killer of its own people, while completely ignoring the presence of armed terrorist groups in Syria and the

Syrian Government's duty to combat those groups and those that back them.

Here, I would like to stress that the solution to the humanitarian crisis in Syria is not through the political animosity of some States members of the Council towards Syria in order to settle old and new scores with us. Nor will it be achieved by fanning the flames of discord or by funding or harbouring armed terrorists and encouraging them to perpetrate massacres and terrorist bombings against Syrian civilians.

Instead, a solution can be achieved by abiding by the principle of providing humanitarian assistance, in particular under resolution 46/182, which determines the mechanisms and conditions for providing humanitarian assistance to States Members of the United Nations. A solution could be ensured if donor States and bodies were to demonstrate the political will to provide what has been pledged and to end the policy of imposing unilateral economic measures.

The politicized resolutions of the Security Council hamper and will continue to impede efforts to establish a Human Rights Council that addresses all human rights violations in the world on the basis of clear standards that apply to all without discrimination. Such resolutions obstruct the impartial role of international parties in putting an end to the crisis in Syria. Instead, they actually encourage more inflexibility, the rejection of national dialogue and continued armed violence, killing and bloodshed. They will hamper any of the steps recently taken by Syria to foster cooperation and openness towards international missions.

In conclusion, we hope to see Ambassador Lasserre use and intervene with her significant moral weight, which we acknowledge and respect, to demand that the States involved in harbouring, arming, supporting and financing the armed groups stop what they are doing to all Syrian people and the entire Syrian State and society. Those States are responsible for terrorizing Syrian citizens and inciting them to flee their homes, thereby turning them into refugees, and for using armed terrorist groups as a tool to destabilize Syria, to strike at the unity and cohesion of its people, and to create a prefabricated humanitarian problem that seeks to stain Syria's image and to harm its international record as a people and a State.

Mr. Och (Mongolia): First of all, allow me to join previous speakers in expressing our gratitude to Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council, for the introduction of the Council's report (A/67/53). As we can see from the report, in recent times continuous efforts have been made by the Council to respond to numerous human rights situations around the world.

It has been highlighted on many occasions that human rights are increasingly interrelated with the efforts of the international community for peace, security and economic and social development, for the promotion of democracy and other advances. My delegation fully shares that view. In that respect, I wish to underline the importance of actions taken by the Council, the special procedures and the human rights treaty bodies, and reaffirm our full support for the efforts of the Council to fulfil its mandate.

Today, we are witnessing an unprecedented international quest for the effective implementation of human rights. As we all know, our leaders reaffirmed their strong commitment to the protection and promotion of human rights at the High-level Meeting on the Rule of Law at the National and International Levels, held last September (see A/67/PV.3). There is an impressive record of accession to and ratification of international human rights instruments, as well as the establishment of national human rights machinery by many countries. Nevertheless, numerous human rights challenges persist, including poverty, discrimination, religious intolerance, armed conflicts, refugee flows, arbitrary executions and the impact of the pervasive economic and financial crisis. One of the latest examples is the ongoing conflict in Syria, with its devastating consequences on civilians.

Those challenges call on Member States to implement sound policies at the national level and to promote enhanced cooperation at the international level. Moreover, the States concerned need more substantive support from the international community to address such issues through enhanced technical assistance and advisory services aimed at capacity-building and human rights education. It is gratifying to note in that regard that the Council has made great strides to support States in implementing their human rights obligations, to advocate the promotion and protection of human rights and to advance the process of strengthening the treaty bodies.

Over the past 20 years, Mongolia has been actively engaged in carrying out an extensive legal reform aimed at bringing national laws in line with international standards. Thus, Mongolia is undertaking step-by-step measures to amend the existing legislation with the aim of abolishing the death penalty in law and practice.

Among others, Mongolia attaches great importance to the implementation of its reporting obligation under the human rights treaties. Thus, the first national human rights report of Mongolia was reviewed in 2010 under the Universal Periodic Review, a unique mechanism for promoting human rights worldwide.

We have shown consistent support for the special procedures of the Human Rights Council. In October, an independent group of experts appointed by the Human Rights Council visited Mongolia to examine the human rights impacts of business activity in Mongolia. I am pleased to note that it was the first country mission of the Working Group on Business and Human Rights since its establishment in June 2011. My Government attaches particular importance to the issue of examining and addressing the impacts that businesses have on the human rights of its people. Consequently, the emphasis on human rights has been made in the action plan of the new Government for 2012-2016.

It is gratifying to note that the Working Group focused on identifying negative impacts, but also positive impacts that business activities could have on the full spectrum of human rights, from creating employment to driving economic growth. As Ms. Margaret Jungk, a member of the Working Group, highlighted in her statement summarizing the work of the mission, the key challenge for any country, especially one that is undergoing rapid economic development like Mongolia, is to maximize these positive effects and, at the same time, minimize the negative effects.

Once again I wish to express our gratitude to the Working Group for its important findings and recommendations. I am confident that due attention shall be given to those recommendations and to the respective actions taken by the Government and businesses in Mongolia. We also look forward to receiving soon the final report of the Working Group, which is expected to be submitted to the Council in June 2013.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my Government's commitment to continued cooperation with the Council, as expressed by our Foreign Minister during his meeting with the President of the Council in October in Geneva. As the Assembly is well aware, Mongolia, in its desire to make an active contribution to the work of the Council, presented its candidature to the Human Rights Council for the elections to be held in 2015. It is my earnest hope that, with the support of fellow member States, we will succeed in our endeavours.

Mr. Rahman (Bangladesh): My delegation would like to thank Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council, for having presented the Council's annual report (A/67/53). We appreciate her able stewardship in taking forward the work of the Council over the past year. We welcome the opportunity to interact with her and share our views on the activities of the Council.

My delegation has had and still has high expectations of the Human Rights Council, the principal body of the United Nations dedicated to the promotion and protection of human rights. The Council, with its institutional machinery such as the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism, the special procedures, the Human Rights Council Advisory Committee and the complaint procedure, is truly in a position to contribute to significant improvements in the enjoyment of human rights.

By establishing the Council, our predecessors intended to usher in a new era in the human rights discourse and to introduce a new culture when it comes to dealing with human rights. We are disturbed by the news of increasing polarization in the Council. That is not a good sign. If we do not move away from that path and seek mutual respect and understanding, the body may soon be as discredited as its predecessor, the Commission for Human Rights.

It is important to nurture the Council as a forum that fosters dialogue and cooperation instead of divisiveness and confrontation. We should focus efforts on making human rights mechanisms more transparent, accountable and balanced so that real change can be brought to the realm of human rights protections. As Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said, all victims of human rights abuses should be able to look to the Human Rights Council as a forum and a springboard for action.

The creation of the Universal Periodic Review mechanism was one of the most significant innovations in the area of human rights. Its greatest strength lies in its universality, with all countries facing scrutiny regardless of their region, size or influence. This peer review mechanism aims to create an environment of mutual trust, confidence and understanding. If we can exploit its full potential, the mechanism may change the culture of human rights discourse. With the second cycle of the UPR in motion, we expect it to be developed into a more meaningful and effective mechanism so that we can eventually get rid of naming and shaming through the controversial country-specific mechanisms.

Our delegation shares the view that the system of special procedures is important to ensure the effective promotion and proper protection of human rights. The streamlined appointment procedure for mandate holders can be mentioned in that connection. The selection process may be further improved, inter alia, through efficient outreach and periodic updating of the roster. With the code of conduct in place, we believe that the special procedure is on the right track to garner the greater legitimacy it has lacked. However, there are still reports of non-compliance with the code, which was very meticulously crafted and unanimously adopted in the Human Rights Council. We would emphasize the critical importance that the mandate holders abide by the code of conduct and remain within their respective jurisdictions for the proper functioning and credibility of the procedure.

On the creation of new mandates, the Council should be careful to avoid unnecessary proliferation or attaching undue importance to a particular group of rights or thematic areas. In total, there should be a balance between the two major groups of rights. The Council should also avoid bringing in controversial issues or norms that are not universally accepted through any loopholes.

The relationship of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with the Human Rights Council remains an issue. We attach great importance to the position of the High Commissioner in promoting and protecting human rights. High Commissioners have, over the years, played an important role in upholding human rights all over the world. We support non-interference in her activities. However, as is the case in other bodies of the United Nations, the Human Rights Council should have oversight responsibility. That issue should be considered at an appropriate time.

The Council is organizing ever more special sessions to deal with human right emergencies. The initiative, nevertheless, has to date remained focused on country situations. There are critical thematic issues that deserve urgent attention. We had one such session on the impact of the financial crisis on human rights couple of years ago. There should be many more such sessions on contemporary issues of importance. I could mention, for example, the incitement of hatred on the Internet. There is an urgent need to address such developments before they create further divisions in society and breed further intolerance and hatred.

As the workload of the Council continues to increase, we cannot and should not ignore its financial needs. It is a pity that the Council is not provided with sufficient money to function properly. A mechanism like the UPR suffers due to inadequate budget provisions for translation services. If we want to see it work as a robust body, we have to ensure that the requisite means are at its disposal. We would urge the General Assembly to take this into consideration when budgetary questions are considered in the relevant Committees.

Mr. Ulibarri (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank the President of the Human Rights Council, Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre, for the report on the work of the Council (A/67/53) and her briefing. We reiterate our unconditional support for the main body of the Organization devoted to human rights.

Today we are considering the content of the report delivered pursuant to the agreements reached in resolution 65/281. Given the importance of this topic, we thank the Chairman of the Third Committee for having refrained from scheduling Committee meetings at the same time as those of the General Assembly, and we encourage the continuation of this practice.

The work of the Council during the reporting period has been commensurate with the challenges faced by the Council. This should continue and to that end we should meet its financial needs, among other things. The successful conclusion of the first cycle of the Universal Periodic Review was an important achievement. We encourage all States to take part in the second cycle with the same enthusiasm and to commit at the highest level to applying its recommendations. We need to seek recommendations that are ever more specific and concrete and seek mechanisms for cooperation to build the national capacities needed to implement them.

Costa Rica has been a member of the Human Rights Council since June 2011. It is from that position of undoubtedly great responsibility that we address this meeting. Within and outside of the Council, our country cooperates actively on the promotion and protection of human rights. We are guided by the principles of universality, impartiality, objectivity, non-selectivity, non-politicization, constructive dialogue and cooperation.

Costa Rica is working actively in interregional groups and seeking to build bridges and contribute to the effective implementation of the decisions and resolutions issued by the Council. Working with other countries and through long-term dialogue and negotiations, we have focused in particular on areas such as human rights education and training and the relationship between human rights, climate change and the environment.

As part of a like-minded group of countries, we were able to bring about the adoption of the United Nations declaration on human rights education and training and the second phase of the World Programme for Human Rights Education. Furthermore, at the twenty-first session, held last September, we sponsored a new and successful resolution that follows up on the Programme (A/HRC/RES/21/14). The resolution was sponsored by 85 delegations and adopted by consensus.

During the nineteenth session, we reached consensus in the Council on establishing the post of independent expert on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment (see A/HRC/RES/19/10).

We have also sought to contribute, as Chair of the Council's situations group, and specifically through Ambassador Christian Guillermet-Fernández, to fostering renewed involvement by members and generating greater credibility and efficacy in that body.

Another of our Council priorities has been the promotion of the human right to peace. In that regard, we should like to highlight the resolution adopted at the twentieth session that establishes a working group to progressively negotiate a draft declaration on the subject (A/HRC/RES/20/15). As a country with no army, which has entrusted its very existence to the proper functioning of the multilateral system, that codification initiative has been of great importance.

Our commitment to the cause of human rights is not merely a key component of our foreign policy, it also has deep roots in our national identity and practices. We have had mandatory and free primary education for both boys and girls since 1869. We abolished the death penalty in 1882 and our army in 1949. We continue to honour that historic tradition with a significant investment in social development and the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights. Costa Rica was the first country to sign the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. We played a key role in the establishment of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and in the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture.

More recently, we have been working constructively and actively in Geneva and New York in the review process of the Human Rights Council and the process aimed at strengthening the treaty bodies. We have extended an open invitation to all special procedures of the United Nations, and we are ready and willing to cooperate effectively with the human rights mechanisms.

Costa Rica would like to continue to cooperate constructively with the work of the Council and has therefore presented its candidacy for re-election for the period from 2014 to 2017. We are committed to remaining open to dialogue and transparency concerning our actions in that body.

Mr. Sareer (Maldives): Let me first of all extend our appreciation to Her Excellency Ms. Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council, for being here with us today and for the presentation of the report of the Human Rights Council (A/67/53) to the General Assembly for this session.

We take note of a number of important milestones achieved in the wake of an eventful and highly productive year for the Council and welcome the leadership role taken by the Human Rights Council on the most pressing and urgent matters before the international community, where other United Nations organs have failed.

Let me also take this opportunity to extend our sincere congratulations to all Member States that were recently elected to the Human Rights Council for the term from 2013 to 2016. Maldives looks forward to working closely with those delegations in Geneva in a constructive manner on all issues before the Council when they assume their seats.

As a member of the Human Rights Council, Maldives has continued to play an active part in supporting the promotion and protection of human rights in the international arena as well as domestically.

We will continue to work within the Council with other Member States, United Nations bodies and civil society to ensure that universal values on the promotion and protection of basic rights are upheld and respected by all States Members of the United Nations.

Since assuming its seat on the Council in 2010, Maldives has collaborated with all delegations on numerous issues that we deemed important to the effective functioning of the international human rights machinery. In March, during the nineteenth session of the Council, Maldives, along with a core group of countries, submitted a draft resolution entitled "Human rights and the environment" (A/HRC/RES/19/10), which established a special mandate holder to look into the relationship between human rights and the environment. We believe that the protection of the environment and human rights are intrinsically linked, and we hope that the work of the independent expert on human rights and the environment will bring to fruition the core interests of Member States at the national, regional and international levels on this important issue.

Maldives also worked with a cross-regional group of countries to create a voluntary trust fund to support activities designed to enhance and improve the capacities of least developed countries and small island developing States in order to encourage their effective participation in the work of the Council. The resolution (A/HRC/RES/19/26), which had 113 sponsors, with broad cross-regional support, establishes a strong mandate to encourage smaller delegations to participate more effectively and actively in the consultative and decision-making processes on human rights matters. The initiative was also important to a number of delegations that do not have diplomatic representation in Geneva. It provided them with a mechanism through which their contributions to the Council can be facilitated, and it upheld the principle of universal participation in all matters relating to human rights.

During the twenty-first session of the Council, in September, Maldives, along with a number of other key partners, continued to support the initiative on the right to freedom of assembly and of association. This year's resolution (A/HRC/RES/21/16) was focused on the role of civil society in promoting the freedom of assembly and association. In 2012, the same group of countries created the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. We believe that is a substantial cross-regional achievement in the light of the Arab Spring and the ongoing efforts to promote human rights by members to add value to the revolutionary changes on the ground.

On the domestic front, Maldives is currently engaged in a process to consolidate its newly formed democratic institutional framework. While the country is faced with a number of challenges in that endeavour, emphasis has been given to the most immediate measures, such as enhancing the administration of justice, strengthening independent institutions and oversight mechanisms, and improving the capabilities of law enforcement agencies. Those reforms are aimed at ensuring that human rights and greater freedoms are effectively implemented, as stipulated under the Constitution of Maldives.

The Human Rights Council, in our view, has largely been a success and a force for good. In recent times, we have all too often seen the politics of diplomacy impede the work of United Nations bodies with little or no regard to the basic rights of ordinary people, which we are committed to protecting. The lack of consensus and the impotence of the Security Council are one such example demonstrating that members need to do more in working together to overcome their differences.

The work of the Human Rights Council on matters relating to the situation of human rights in respective countries has been commendable, and Maldives will continue to strongly support mechanisms in the Council that are aimed at the independent investigation of atrocities committed in countries, especially in such tumultuous times as these, with a view to enabling transparent, open and inclusive processes that would effectively uphold the basic tenets of why the Human Rights Council was created in the first place.

On the issue of Palestine, Maldives will continue to support the creation of an independent State of Palestine, living side by side and at peace with the State of Israel. We remain, however, deeply concerned by the repeated violations of the human rights of the Palestinians living under appalling conditions in the occupied territories.

In conclusion, Maldives looks forward to an active year in the Council, and we would like to see a continued focus on the situation in the Middle East. We would also like to see the active participation of all Member States in the work of the Council, especially the small island developing States and the least developed countries.

Maldives attaches great importance to the advancement of women and the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. During our membership of the Council so far, Maldives has been a strong supporter of the Universal Periodic Review process and has supported various initiatives in the Council that would further enhance and improve multilateral efforts to promote human rights domestically and globally.

Mr. Elbahi (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my delegation expresses its thanks and appreciation to Ambassador Laura Dupuy Lasserre, President of the Human Rights Council, for the comprehensive statement that she delivered here and the one that she will deliver to the Third Committee later today, in accordance with resolution 65/281. We wish her every success in accomplishing her tasks.

The establishment of the Human Rights Council six years ago was an important achievement for the General Assembly and its subsidiary organs in addressing human rights issues on the basis of the equality of all member States, and as reflected in the Universal Periodic Review, to which all members without exception are subject. The Council also provides advice, in accordance with its mandate set out in resolution 60/251, through the special procedures system. That is an important service provided that mandate holders adhere to the principles of impartiality and avoid politicization and selectivity, according to the text of the mandates and the Code of Conduct for Special Procedures Mandate-holders of the Human Rights Council, adopted by the Council in its resolution 5/2 and re-emphasized in its resolution 11/11 of June 2009.

In reiterating the Sudan's cooperation with the Human Rights Council, it is my pleasure to report that the Sudan submitted its first report to the Universal Periodic Review in Geneva last year, accepted its recommendations and established a special mechanism to implement them. The mechanism is a high-level national commission under the Advisory Council on Human Rights, which is the highest Government authority for the promotion and protection of human rights in the Sudan. Those positive developments, which were included in the report, in addition to the Sudan's signing of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols, have been welcomed by the Council. My delegation reiterates once more its readiness to abide by and implement all the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review.

At its most recent session, the Human Rights Council unanimously decided to extend the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Sudan in order to provide technical assistance under agenda item 10. The decision represented the Council's recognition of the positive developments in the human rights situation in the Sudan and clearly reflects the efforts of the Government of the Sudan to promote and protect human rights. My delegation welcomes that decision and hopes that the Independent Expert will help the new national human rights commission to become fully operational, on the basis of the Paris Principles. During the first five months of its existence, the commission has drawn up a comprehensive plan of action to protect and promote human rights, in cooperation and coordination with national and international partners.

In addition, my country has seen several positive developments that will certainly contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights in the Sudan. They include the establishment of the Transitional Darfur Regional Authority under the Doha Darfur Peace Agreement, a special court for Darfur, and the post of special prosecutor for Darfur.

The Government has accepted the humanitarian mandate for Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan. Moreover, in an economic initiative for the two States, a series of measures have been adopted to expand agriculture, including the heightening of the Roseires Dam in Blue Nile province. In Abyei, the deployment of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei is complete, and the signing of the nine sub-agreements on cooperation with our sister country, the Republic of South Sudan, represents the culmination of many efforts.

In conclusion, my delegation calls for sufficient funds to be made available to enable the Council and the High Commissioner for Human Rights to thoroughly fulfil their responsibilities, notably by giving economic, social and cultural rights the same priority accorded to civil and political rights and by opposing the tendency to exploit concept of the freedom of expression and opinion to insult religions, faiths and creeds, or to justify acts that incite hatred and violence based on religions or creeds. We also ask the Council to avoid the inclusion of controversial concepts in its work.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with resolution 57/32 of 19 November

2002, I now give the floor to the observer of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

Mr. Bermeo Estrella (Inter-Parliamentary Union): The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) continues to work for stronger parliamentary engagement with existing United Nations mechanisms to enhance respect for human rights. Since the beginning of the year, the work has centred in particular on associating parliaments more closely with the work of the Human Rights Council, in particular its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mechanism.

The IPU believes that parliaments have a critical role to play to ensure that the UPR becomes ever more effective. Parliaments, through their legislative, oversight and budgetary functions, can directly contribute to the success of the UPR. However, a study that we conducted in 2009 to assess the extent to which parliaments were involved in the UPR process found that the vast majority were not even aware of the existence of the UPR.

The IPU has therefore made it a priority to raise awareness among parliaments about the UPR and about the contribution that they can make to it. From the beginning of this year, the IPU has systematically informed parliaments of the forthcoming examination of their countries' national reports. We have started to organize capacity-building workshops for parliamentarians to promote a better understanding of the UPR and of the role of parliaments. As part of those efforts, earlier this week the IPU, together with the Commonwealth Secretariat, brought together more than 70 parliamentarians and staff from some 30 countries. Without exception, participants underscored our earlier findings that once parliaments knew about the UPR, they wanted to be associated with it.

The question, of course, is how to do that. There is no doubt that parliaments have a key role to play in helping to ensure that UPR recommendations are translated into national action. However, should parliaments also contribute to the drafting of the report? There are some who say it should not, because it is the preserve of executive branches and because parliaments would otherwise compromise its independence. However, others believe that nothing prevents parliaments from contributing to the report and subsequently holding Governments to account for the implementation of the UPR recommendations. Whichever side one would choose, there seems to be consensus that, as a minimum, parliaments need to be informed of the report and should have a possibility to debate it before it is sent to the Council in Geneva.

Should members of parliament also be part of the official delegation presenting the report to the Council? Again, opinions differ — largely for the same reasons as those related to parliaments' contributions to the drafting process. However, no one seems to disagree that there is great merit in allowing members of parliament, in an observer capacity as part of their official delegation or otherwise, to attend the interactive dialogue in the Council on their countries' situation. As a result, they will gain direct insight into the functioning of the UPR and get first-hand impressions of how the executive fared in the process, in particular how it responded to questions and concerns from the Council and what commitments it decided to undertake.

Ideally, parliamentarians attending the Council's sessions should represent both the majority and opposition parties in parliament and work directly on human rights issues, such as members of dedicated parliamentary human rights committees.

Allowing parliaments to contribute to the UPR requires the Council to take full account of that contribution and, where possible, seek to promote it in the course of its own deliberations. For instance, nothing is preventing the Council from questioning official delegations whether their parliament has seen or debated the report. In the same vein, the Council can ask official delegations if they intend to subsequently inform their parliaments of the UPR recommendations.

The IPU, with the support of the presidency of the Human Rights Council, has undertaken several activities this year to raise awareness among Council members and the human rights community at large to illustrate in concrete terms how parliaments have directly contributed to the impact of its work at the national level, and thus bring home the message that the Council has much to gain by enhancing parliamentary involvement in its work. The IPU intends to take those initiatives to the next level in 2013 and to advocate for the organization of a panel discussion of the Council, as part of its official programme, on the contribution of parliaments to the UPR and, more largely, to the promotion of human rights, so as to strengthen synergies between the Council and parliaments.

Let me conclude by referring to resolution 66/261, which the Assembly adopted in May, on interaction between the United Nations, national parliaments and the IPU and in which the Assembly encourages the IPU to provide a parliamentary contribution to the Human Rights Council.

I hope that my intervention has shown the Assembly that the IPU is as determined, as ever, to play its role in ensuring greater parliamentary involvement in the Human Rights Council and, more specifically, in the UPR, with a view to enhancing its effectiveness.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 64.

A representative has requested to speak in exercise of the right of reply. Before giving the floor to that representative, may I remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

I now give the floor to the representative of Bahrain.

Ms. Alkhalifa (Bahrain): We take the floor in exercise of the right of reply to the statement given by the representative of the Principality of Liechtenstein. The Kingdom of Bahrain would like to note that any observer of the transparent interaction and active engagement of the Kingdom with the Human Rights Council, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the various mandate holders should be reassured of Bahrain's commitment to the promotion and the protection of human rights.

Our participation as the first country to undergo the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process in both its first and second cycles, in connection with which we fully accepted 90 per cent of the recommendations presented in September, is a fact that should be welcomed and lauded by our peers. Any doubt cast on the commitments of the Kingdom of Bahrain reflect blatant disregard of the continuous efforts made by the Kingdom to fulfil its international obligations.

The Kingdom of Bahrain will continue on its path of reform, a fact that is reflected in the various reports of our international partners. Those reports, such as that of the working group of the UPR, are all public documents. We call on the representative of Liechtenstein to familiarize himself with their findings, to ease any concern.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 64.

Agenda item 75

Oceans and the law of the sea

Draft resolution (A/67/L.4)

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): Before we proceed, I would like to remind members that the debate on agenda item 75 and its sub-items (a) and (b) is scheduled to the place on Tuesday, 11 December. I should also like to remind members that the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea will take place on Monday, 10 December.

We shall now consider draft resolution A/67/L.4, entitled "Plenary meetings of the General Assembly on 10 and 11 December 2012 devoted to the consideration of the item entitled 'Oceans and the law of the sea' and to the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the opening for signature of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea".

I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Zhang Saijin (Department for General Assembly and Conference Management): I wish to announce that since the issuance of document A/67/L.4, the following countries have also become sponsors of the draft resolution: the Bahamas, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Denmark, Estonia, Fiji, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, Madagascar, Montenegro, Poland, Portugal, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Samoa, Suriname, Tonga and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): May I take it that the General Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/67/L.4?

Draft resolution A/67/L.4 was adopted (resolution 67/5).

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now give the floor to the representative of Argentina to make a statement following the adoption of resolution 67/5.

Ms. Millicay (Argentina) (*spoke in Spanish*): Argentina would like to acknowledge the many delegations that have worked in a very cooperative and active way to promote the commemoration of the thirtieth anniversary of the signing of the United

Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, which will be a joint effort on the part of many Member States, with the usual support of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea and the Office of Legal Affairs. We would therefore like to thank all Member States for their support for the adoption of resolution 67/5.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 75.

Agenda item 110 (*continued*)

Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections

(b) Election of thirty members of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): The 30 outgoing Member States of the Commission on International Trade Law are as follows: Armenia, Bahrain, Benin, the Plurinational State of Bolivia, Bulgaria, Cameroon, Canada, Chile, China, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Japan, Latvia, Malaysia, Malta, Mexico, Morocco, Namibia, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Senegal, Singapore, South Africa, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Those Member States are eligible for immediate re-election.

I should like to remind members that, as of 8 July 2013, the following States will continue to be represented on the Commission: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Austria, Botswana, Brazil, Colombia, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Fiji, Gabon, Georgia, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Kenya, Mauritius, Nigeria, Pakistan, Paraguay, the Philippines, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, the United States of America and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Therefore, those 30 States are not eligible for election.

The General Assembly will now proceed to the election of 30 members to replace those members whose term of office will expire on 7 July 2013. In accordance with rule 92 of the rules of procedure, the election shall be held by secret ballot and there shall be no nominations. I should like to recall, however, paragraph 16 of decision 34/401, whereby the practice of dispensing with the secret ballot for elections to subsidiary organs when the number of candidates corresponds to the number of seats to be filled should become standard, unless a delegation specifically requests a vote on a given election.

In the absence of such a request, may I take it that the Assembly decides to proceed to the election on the basis of dispensing with the secret ballot?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): With regard to candidatures, I should like to inform members of the following.

For the seven seats from among the African States, there are seven endorsed candidates: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, Mauritania, Namibia, Sierra Leone and Zambia.

For the seven seats from among the Asia-Pacific States, there are seven endorsed candidates: China, Indonesia, Japan, Kuwait, Malaysia, the Republic of Korea and Singapore.

For the four seats from among the Eastern European States, the group has endorsed Armenia, Bulgaria, Hungary and the Russian Federation.

For the five seats from among the Latin American and Caribbean States, there are five endorsed candidates: Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, Mexico and Panama.

For the seven seats from among the Western European and other States, there are six endorsed candidates: Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Switzerland and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Since the number of candidates of the five regional groups is equal to or less than the number of seats to be filled by each group, may I take it that the General Assembly wishes to declare those candidates elected for a six-year term beginning on 8 July 2013?

It was so decided.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I congratulate the following States that the General Assembly has declared elected members of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law for a six-year term beginning on 8 July 2013: Armenia, Bulgaria, Cameroon, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Denmark, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Indonesia, Japan, Kuwait, Liberia, Malaysia, Mauritania, Mexico, Namibia, Panama, the Republic of Korea, the Russian Federation, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Zambia.

With regard to the one remaining vacancy from among the Western European and other States, the General Assembly will hold elections upon notification by interested Member States from that region.

The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of sub-item (b) of agenda item 110.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.

United Nations

A/67/PV.38

General Assembly

Sixty-seventh session

Official Records

38th plenary meeting
Thursday, 15 November 2012, 10 a.m.
New York

President: Mr. Jeremić .... (Serbia)

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 108

Notification by the Secretary-General under Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations

Note by the Secretary-General (A/67/300)

The President: As members are aware, in accordance with the provisions of Article 12, paragraph 2, of the Charter of the United Nations and with the consent of the Security Council, the Secretary-General is mandated to notify the General Assembly of matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security that are being dealt with by the Security Council and of matters with which the Council has ceased to deal.

In that connection, the General Assembly has before it a note by the Secretary-General issued as document A/67/300. May I take it that the Assembly takes note of this document?

It was so decided.

The President: May I take it that it is the wish of the General Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 108?

It was so decided.

Agenda items 30 and 117

Report of the Security Council

Report of the Security Council (A/67/2)

Question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters

The President: I now give the floor to the President of the Security Council, His Excellency Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri, to introduce the report of the Security Council (A/67/2).

Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri (India), President of the Security Council: Mr. President, I would like, first of all, to congratulate you on behalf of the members of the Security Council on your election as President of the General Assembly. It is an honour for me, as President of the Security Council for the month of November, to introduce the annual report of the Security Council (A/67/2). The presentation of the report is more than a regular reporting exercise pursuant to the United Nations Charter. The report underscores the importance of the relationship between both principal organs of the United Nations and provides an excellent opportunity to debate and exchange views with the general membership on the report on the work of the Council. I am therefore grateful to you, Mr. President, for having arranged today's meeting for the consideration of the Security Council's annual report.

The report covers the period from August 2011 to July 2012. The introduction to the report was prepared by the delegation of Colombia, which held the presidency

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

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in July 2012. I wish to thank Ambassador Néstor Osorio and his team for their efforts in preparing the introduction, to which I call the Assembly's attention, because it gives a helpful overview of the different activities under the responsibility of the Council during the reporting period. Allow me also to thank the Secretariat, which prepared the other parts of the report now before the Assembly.

I would also like to highlight the monthly assessments by each presidency, which are mentioned in the report. They contain information, set forth on a monthly basis, on the most relevant activities carried out by the Council on each item of its agenda, thus facilitating the overall comprehension of the report. Those monthly assessments are an important exercise, regularly undertaken as part of the responsibility of each presidency and are aimed at informing the wider membership about the work of the Council. I call the Assembly's attention to them as well.

During the reporting period, the Council adopted 60 resolutions and 25 presidential statements and issued 83 statements to the press. The Council held 222 formal meetings, of which 205 were public meetings. Open meetings, including open debates, increased the transparency in the work of the Council and allowed for enhanced participation by the wider membership and the international community. The presidencies of the Council and of the General Assembly continued to meet regularly throughout the year, and monthly briefings by the Presidents of the Council to the wider membership on the Council's work continued to be held.

Meetings with troop contributors have also taken place as a regular practice, in particular prior to any decision that would have an impact on United Nations peacekeeping mandates, as a way to enable the collection of relevant inputs. Those practices represent useful steps aimed at promoting better dialogue with the general membership on the work of the Council. We encourage delegations to make use of those opportunities to strengthen such interaction.

The Council continued its implementation of note S/2010/507 on working methods and sought to undertake further reform of the Council's working methods wherever possible, including by better planning and spreading out its workload, ensuring that reporting requirements were adequate to their purpose and providing for more efficient use of conference resources and more interactive exchanges among Council members. Presidencies have promoted useful practices aimed at increasing efficiency and expediency, such as streamlined introductions by the President and video conferences in open briefings and debates aimed at providing updates from the field. Council members have agreed to reduce the use of speakers' lists and better use of "Other matters" to discuss issues of concern. Informal interactive dialogues were also held regularly as a useful consultation practice.

During the period of the report, many of the activities of the Council were centred, as in previous years, on situations in Africa, including the Sudan, Darfur, South Sudan, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Somalia, and the question of piracy off the coast of Somalia and in the Gulf of Guinea. The two missions conducted by the Council during the period under review were to Haiti, in February 2012, and West Africa — Côte d'Ivoire, Liberia, and Sierra Leone — in May. The Council also held a consultative meeting with the African Union Peace and Security Council in New York in June.

The Security Council closely followed the unresolved disputes between the Sudan and South Sudan after the latter's independence in July 2011. Following the resumption of fighting on the border, the Council adopted resolution 2046 (2012) in May to endorse the African Union road map and to demand that the parties achieve a negotiated solution for all unresolved issues after the secession within a period of three months. The Council also continued to closely follow the implementation of resolution 2046 (2012) and remained seized of the ongoing negotiations between the Sudan and South Sudan to resolve the outstanding Comprehensive Peace Agreement issues under the auspices of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel.

With regard to Somalia, the Security Council's strong support for the transition process was instrumental in bringing to power the most representative Somali leadership in decades. The joint African Union-United Nations technical assessment mission resulted in a revised concept of operations for the African Union Mission in Somalia, which contributed to a significant improvement in the security situation across the country.

The Council considered the events in various countries on its agenda prior to, during and after elections that took place during the period under review. Following developments in Libya and taking note of the Declaration of Liberation, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2016 (2011) on

27 October 2011, reiterating the need for the transitional period to be underpinned by a commitment to democracy and respect for human rights, and terminating the mandates regarding the protection of civilians and the no-fly zone, as stipulated in resolution 1973 (2011).

The Security Council reacted repeatedly with concern to the worsening security and humanitarian situation in eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo owing to the violence caused by the Mouvement du 23 mars and all armed groups. Following the deterioration of the security situation in Mali with the 20 March military coup and the northern part of the country being occupied by armed rebel and terrorist groups, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2056 (2012) on 5 July to set a comprehensive path to solve all aspects of the crisis. The Security Council also requested the elaboration and implementation of a United Nations integrated strategy for the Sahel. Reiterating its strong condemnation of the 12 April military coup that occurred in Guinea-Bissau, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2048 (2012) on 18 May, demanding the restoration of and respect for the constitutional order.

Developments in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question and the ongoing effects of the Arab Spring, remained prominent on the Council's agenda. The Council held monthly briefings and consultations on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, and quarterly open debates on the issue. Members expressed concern at the continuing stalemate in the Middle East peace process and urged the negotiated settlement of all issues. The Council also heard briefings from the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on the human rights and humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory.

The Council closely followed developments in Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Lebanon. One of the main issues considered by the Council was the application of Palestine for membership in the United Nations. Following the adoption of various press statements in 2011, the Council in April 2012 unanimously adopted resolution 2042 (2012), authorizing an advance team to monitor the ceasefire in Syria, and resolution 2043 (2012), establishing the United Nations Supervision Mission in Syria to monitor and support the implementation of the six-point proposal of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States, Mr. Kofi Annan.

With respect to the situation in Yemen, the Council unanimously adopted resolution 2051 (2012), expressing support to President Hadi Mansour and the Government of National Unity of Yemen to move the transition process forward and encouraging the international community to provide active and increasing support to help the Yemeni Government meet the outstanding political, security, economic and humanitarian challenges.

The Council also continued to monitor developments in Afghanistan and countries of the Asian region, including the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Myanmar and Timor-Leste.

In Europe, the Security Council followed up on its long-standing interest in exploring ways and means to support Bosnia and Herzegovina in its institutionalization process, as well as encouraging greater progress in the negotiations in Cyprus, and monitored the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the pacific settlement of differences through the Belgrade-Pristina dialogue.

The Security Council reaffirmed its commitment to ensuring stability and security in Haiti and to assisting that country in the rebuilding process by extending the mandate of United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti through resolution 2012 (2011).

The issue of the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction also figured prominently on the agenda.

The Council also considered issues concerning the International Tribunals for Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, and heard reports from the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and the President of the International Court of Justice.

Other priorities of the Council's work included thematic, general and cross-cutting issues. Debates and consultations were held on peace and security in Africa and support for the United Nations Office in West Africa and the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa.

The Council commended and promoted cooperation with sub-regional organizations and in particular with the African Union via resolution 2033 (2012), which encourages the enhancement of the relationship.

The issues of children and armed conflict, women and peace and security, the protection of civilians and post-conflict peacebuilding also figured on the Council's agenda, with several important debates being held during the period. In August 2011, following an open debate on United Nations peacekeeping operations, the Council adopted a presidential statement (S/PRST/2011/17), which, among other things, sought to deepen the existing cooperation among the Council, the Secretariat and the troop- and police-contributing countries.

During the reporting period, the Security Council also approved 25 resolutions extending the mandates of various peacekeeping and monitoring missions.

In July, the Council held an open debate on post-conflict peacebuilding (S/PV.6805) to consider the annual report of the Peacebuilding Commission (S/2012/70), which was followed by an interactive dialogue focused on how to realize the Commission's full potential and bring all parties together around common strategies.

The Security Council remained seized of the threat posed by terrorism and heard regular briefings by the Chairs of the Committees established pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011), 1373 (2001) and 1540 (2004). In press statements the Council strongly condemned the terrorist acts that occurred in various locations between August 2011 and July 2012.

I could go on and on about the matters that were under the Council's consideration during the reporting period. But I would rather listen to you, Mr. President, and to the representatives of other Member States. I have therefore not mentioned several other issues that are discussed in detail in the report and that may be referred to.

The annual report before the Assembly includes a significant amount of analytical, descriptive and statistical information on the work of the Council, the preparation of which required serious effort on the part of delegations in the Council and the Secretariat. I hope that Member States will seize this opportunity to discuss the report, and I will be glad to take their suggestions back to my colleagues in the Council. There is always room for improvement, and Council members will benefit from the Assembly's comments and suggestions.

Mr. Khalil (Egypt): I have the honour to speak today on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. At the outset, Mr. President, I would like to express the Movement's appreciation for your pledge to assist in advancing the process of reforming the Security Council during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly, and to congratulate the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan on his reappointment as chair of the intergovernmental negotiations. The Movement also takes this opportunity to thank the Permanent Representative of India, the current President of the Council, for presenting the Security Council's annual report (A/67/2) for the period from 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2012. We also thank the Colombian delegation for its efforts in drafting an introduction to the report during its presidency of the Council in July.

The Non-Aligned Movement attaches great importance to achieving concrete results on Security Council reform through intergovernmental negotiations, on the basis of decision 62/557 and subsequent decisions, culminating in decision 65/554. Reform of the Security Council should be addressed in a timely, comprehensive, transparent and balanced manner, without setting artificial deadlines. It should also address all substantive issues relating to the question of membership, regional representation, the Council's agenda, its working methods and its decision-making process, including the veto. It should seek to garner the widest possible political acceptance on the part of Member States, in line with the provisions of the Charter and the relevant decisions, particularly decision 62/557.

Enlarging the Security Council and reforming its working methods should seek to make it more democratic, representative, accountable and effective. In that context, the sixteenth Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Tehran, acknowledged the historical injustice done to Africa with regard to its representation in the Council and expressed support for its increased and enhanced representation in a reformed Security Council. The Summit also took note of the African common position, as reflected in the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration.

Improving the Security Council's working methods is crucial to its effectiveness. Transparency, openness and consistency are key elements that it should maintain in all its activities. The Non-Aligned Movement continues to reject any attempt to use the Council as a platform to pursue national political agendas. We stress the importance of non-selectivity and impartiality in its work. The Movement also reiterates its concern about the Security Council's continued encroachment on the functions and powers of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council by addressing issues that traditionally fall within the competence of those bodies. We reject the Council's constant attempts to use thematic issues under its consideration to expand its mandate into areas that do not pose a threat to international peace and security. The Council should keep strictly within the powers and functions accorded to it by Member States under the United Nations Charter.

The sanctions imposed by the Security Council remain an issue of serious concern to the non-aligned countries. The objectives of the sanctions regimes should be clearly defined, their imposition should be for a specific time frame, and they should be based on tenable legal grounds.

The Security Council's accountability to the General Assembly is well established in the Charter. The Assembly's consideration of the Council's annual report is a core element in the relationship between those two principal organs. Resolution 66/294 on the revitalization of the work of the General Assembly welcomes the improvements that have been made in the quality of the Council's annual reports and encourages the Council to make further improvements as necessary.

Having examined this year's report, the Non-Aligned Movement believes that there is still ample room for improvement in its quality. The report should be more explanatory and analytical in its assessment of the work of the Council, including in those cases where the Council has failed to act, as well as of the reasons behind the various outcomes, whether in the form of resolutions, presidential statements, press releases or statements to the press. It is also imperative that future annual reports should also reflect the general views expressed by non-members of the Council during its open debates. Issues to be covered at any briefings by the Secretariat should be determined in coordination with the concerned State or party and after approval by all members of the Security Council.

The Non-Aligned Movement supports increased cooperation between the Security Council and the African Union Peace and Security Council within the framework of cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union.

The Movement regrets that the Security Council Committee on the Admission of New Members was not able to issue a positive recommendation for Palestine's application for admission to full membership of the United Nations, owing to the lack of unanimity among Council members on the issue. The Movement fully supports the application submitted by Palestine, which is consistent with the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and independence.

The Non-Aligned Movement remains committed to the ongoing process of the overall reform of the United Nations, including of the Security Council. Any reform measures should be decided by the general membership through an intergovernmental process. The voice of each Member State must be heard and respected.

I would now like to say a few more words in my national capacity as the representative of Egypt. I would first like to associate my remarks with the statement to be delivered later on behalf of the African Group. The consensus decision 62/557, establishing the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform, set clear parameters for that process, as well as its principles and framework. Paragraph (d) of the decision states that intergovernmental negotiations should be based only on proposals submitted by Member States. The rationale is to maintain the intergovernmental nature of the process and avoid jeopardizing the impartiality of the President of the General Assembly and the chair of the intergovernmental negotiations. The main objective of the negotiations is to ensure the widest possible political acceptance by Member States themselves.

The five negotiables of the intergovernmental negotiations have proved to be inextricably linked. They constitute an integral, inseparable package that has to be agreed upon in its entirety. That is why the piecemeal solutions and/or initiatives presented by some groups have failed to garner the necessary support of Member States.

The intergovernmental negotiations should be aimed at reaching a comprehensive agreement that would have an effect on the power structure of the Security Council. Egypt, along with the African Group, continues to oppose any drafting exercise that entails merging language and streamlining positions in a text without agreeing on the principles and criteria underlying the five key issues first.

The annual Security Council report under consideration today mentions in its very first page that "[m]any of the Council's activities, discussions and efforts were concerned with the situation in several African countries" (*A/67/2, p. 1*). Despite that fact, Africa remains unrepresented in the permanent category and underrepresented in the non-permanent category of the Security Council compared to all other regions. The African Common Position, as reflected in the Ezulwini Consensus, does not seek to impose national political interests. It aims at achieving the legitimate aspirations of a whole continent that includes 54 countries. We aim to rectify the historical injustice inflicted on Africa with respect to its representation in the Security Council.

Enhanced representation of the developing countries in the Security Council has been one of the fundamental pillars of the reform process since the adoption of resolution 48/26. Egypt stresses the need to duly take into account the position of the members of the League of Arab States, who are demanding a permanent seat for the Arab Group in any future expansion in the category of permanent membership in the Council. We also stress the need to take into account the position of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which is demanding adequate representation of the Muslim world in any category of membership in an expanded Security Council.

Finally, I cannot conclude my statement without offering a practical reminder of the urgent necessity to reform the working methods of the Security Council. Yesterday, Egypt requested an urgent meeting of the Security Council to address the alarming escalation by Israel in Gaza. We deeply appreciate the earnest response of the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, in convening a meeting less than six hours after our request (S/PV.6863). Yet the Council was not able to agree on holding a public meeting. It decided on the format of a private meeting. That proves the need for more transparency in the Council's work. It shows that procedural issues raised by a limited category of Council members are able to obstruct the work of the Council.

In conclusion, Egypt reiterates the need for political will on the part of all of us, large and small, developing and developed, permanent and non-permanent members, in order to achieve an effective result that garners the widest possible political acceptance.

Mr. Wolfe (Jamaica): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the group of countries that sponsored draft resolution A/61/L.69/Rev.1 six years ago. The L.69 group brings together a diverse group of developing countries from Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Asia and the Pacific that are united by a common cause, that is, to achieve lasting and comprehensive reform of the Security Council. The group is strongly united in its firm conviction that expansion in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories of membership of the Security Council is needed in order better to reflect contemporary world realities and achieve a more accountable, representative and transparent Security Council.

We, the L.69 group, were instrumental in starting the intergovernmental negotiations. We remain engaged in those negotiations on the understanding that the United Nations Charter, the rules of procedure of the General Assembly and relevant General Assembly resolutions require the support of a two-thirds majority of the United Nations membership for any decision in that regard.

Let me at the outset place on record the group's appreciation for the work of Ambassador Zahir Tanin of Afghanistan during the most recent General Assembly session. He has been an integral and invaluable part of the intergovernmental negotiations since 2009. During the eighth round of intergovernmental negotiations, held during the previous General Assembly session, it was clear that the membership desires early reform that includes expansion in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories and improvements in the Council's working methods.

Secondly, the membership of the Assembly acknowledges the positive and constructive role that has been and continues to be played by the L.69 group. Indeed, the fact that ours is the only group that has increased in membership over the years testifies to the group's influential role. In keeping with our tradition of active support for the reform process, we have also put forward a number of proposals for transforming our interactions and deliberations into real negotiations.

Thirdly, our group has also been able to enhance convergences with other like-minded groups, in particular the African Group. The L.69 and the Committee of 10 of the African Union have been collaborating closely on the convergences between them with regard to comprehensive reform. Let me reiterate today that the L.69 group acknowledges the African Common Position. We are of one mind in stressing that the reform we envisage is far-reaching and intended to ensure that the Council's structure and its way of doing business is fundamentally changed so as to make it reflective of current geopolitical realities.

On each of the five key issues of Security Council reform there exist clear convergences. In the view of the L.69 group, the convergences are as follows.

First, the Security Council must be enlarged in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories.

Secondly, the new permanent members should have the same prerogatives and privileges as those of the current permanent members, including the veto.

Thirdly, additional seats in an expanded Council should include permanent members from Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean region as well as from the Western European and other States. There should be additional non-permanent seats from Africa, Asia, the Eastern European Group, Latin America and the Caribbean region, as well as one non-permanent seat for small island developing States across all regions. Further, regional groups should coordinate to ensure that there is regular representation for small developing States in the non-permanent category.

Fourthly, the number of the Council's members should be expanded to the mid-twenties, and it should adapt its working methods so as to increase the involvement of States not members of the Council in its work as appropriate, enhance its accountability to the membership and increase the transparency of its work.

Fifthly, the General Assembly's role as the chief deliberative policy-making and representative organ of the United Nations must be respected in both letter and spirit. It is the considered view of the L.69 group that intergovernmental negotiations should be started immediately with the aim of formalizing the convergences that I have just articulated.

In closing, allow me to recall paragraph 30 of the Millennium Declaration (resolution 55/2), in which world leaders resolved, inter alia, to intensify their efforts to achieve a comprehensive reform of the Security Council in all its aspects. I would also like to specifically highlight paragraph 153 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), in which leaders further resolved to support early reform of the Security Council as an essential element of their overall efforts to reform the United Nations in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient and transparent and thus further enhance its effectiveness and the legitimacy and implementation of its decisions.

The L.69 Group remains committed to playing its part in ensuring that that comprehensive reform is not left to future generations.

Mr. Ragaglini (Italy): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening today's debate, which is helping us to focus concretely on two Security Council-related issues: the annual report (A/67/2) and the reform process.

During the period covered by the report, the Council dealt with several regional crises in Africa, particularly those in Mali and Guinea-Bissau, following military coups, and that in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, resulting from the violence wrought by the Mouvement du 23 mars. It also addressed the situation in the Middle East, especially in Syria and Yemen, and the situations in Asia, namely, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Timor-Leste. Considerable time was also devoted to thematic and general issues, such as the rule of law, peacebuilding, conflict prevention, non-proliferation and cooperation with regional organizations, especially the African Union.

In that context, we appreciate the quality of the report and its introduction prepared by our Colombian colleague, Ambassador Néstor Osorio, and the extensive efforts to make it more complete and detailed. We encourage the Security Council to continue in that direction as a way to improve its relationship with the General Assembly and to promote a greater involvement of the membership in its proceedings.

On the subject of Security Council reform, let me start by thanking you, Mr. President, on behalf of the Uniting for Consensus group, for your letter of 9 November informing us of the reappointment of Ambassador Tanin as chair of the intergovernmental negotiations. As the letter duly notes, there are, within the membership, "various concerns and divergent points of view on the different aspects of this complex and sensitive matter". In addition, your letter rightly points out that "predictability and full transparency remain essential ingredients in the ongoing process." The letter concludes by informing us of your intention to work closely with the chair.

We could not agree more. We are convinced that the reform of the Security Council is one of the most sensitive and divisive topics at the United Nations, since it touches on the strategic interests of all 193 Member States. We are also convinced that transparency and predictability are needed in order to build confidence among Member States. That is why we consider the

President of the General Assembly to be the ultimate and impartial guarantor of the entire process.

Let me briefly summarize the philosophy underlying the Uniting for Consensus group's proposal. In that connection, I wish to recall that our group is the only one that entered the intergovernmental negotiations with some fresh ideas. It was a sign of flexibility that was never reciprocated.

The three principles of our platform are all based on the importance of an elected Security Council and on decision 62/557. First, regular elections are imperative in order to ensure an accountable, accessible Security Council in which membership is earned as a privileged responsibility and not granted as a permanent right to individual countries in fulfilment of their national aspirations; secondly, the election process makes the Council flexible and adaptable to the constant changes in the world's political and economic landscape; thirdly, the electoral system makes the Security Council more representative. Permanent membership, with no provision for periodic endorsement from the wider membership, has no representative character whatsoever.

In line with those principles, the Uniting for Consensus group has proposed a new category of seats with longer terms of up to six years, as well as an increase in the number of regular non-permanent members. Our proposal also provides a quota for the representation of small States in the Security Council.

We are also convinced there is a need to correct the underrepresentation of Africa, so our proposal offers a viable compromise that addresses that continent's particularities. Some of the specifics include Charter recognition, size and allocation of new seats; for example, under the proposal, 40 per cent of the new seats, in particular those with longer terms, would go to Africa. We suggest that the African representatives be selected or rotated by the African Union or the Group of African States, after which the slate would be submitted to the General Assembly for election. In that way, the ambitions of a continent, rather than the aspirations of individual Member States, would be recognized.

Finally, we feel that the working methods should be improved through greater openness and transparency, that the Security Council should be more accountable to the General Assembly — and an elected Council would be the best guarantee in that respect — and that the veto should be limited, if not abolished.

Turning now to the process, the move from a long-standing working group to intergovernmental negotiations stemmed from decision 62/557, which was adopted by consensus in 2008. That decision states clearly that the negotiations must be based on the proposals of Member States. It adds that the five key issues or negotiables should be dealt with in a comprehensive way, and thus clearly rejects any piecemeal approach. That decision must be upheld. Any attempt to force through a piecemeal approach is bound to fail. The same fate is reserved for proposals that are not mandated by or do not originate from Member States.

It is clear that Security Council reform is still a very sensitive matter on which there are deep concerns and points of divergence within the membership. After almost 20 years of failed attempts to impose contrasting visions on one another, we all need to work together to forge a genuine compromise that can gain the widest political support — hence the crucial role of the President of the General Assembly and the chair of the intergovernmental negotiations as confidence-builders who can bring the players to the same table. Yet, according to decision 62/557, the determination as to which card to play must remain in the hands of the Member States.

One constructive way to commence the session would be to have the chair consult with Member States to agree on a predictable and transparent calendar of work. That approach proved to be useful last year, and we encourage you, Sir, and Ambassador Tanin to repeat that scheme. Any proposal that has not been agreed upon or mandated by the Member States risks sending us back to square one. That is not what we want. It would also not encourage concrete progress in the reform process.

Along those lines, Mr. President, you can count on the Uniting for Consensus group's support and flexibility.

Mr. Rybakov (Belarus) (*spoke in Russian*): We are grateful to the Security Council for having prepared the report on its work over the past year (A/67/2). The delegation of Belarus has studied the document carefully and takes note of its comprehensive and informative nature. We support the point of view that the report would be of even greater value for delegations, particularly those that are not Council members, if it contained elements analysing the situations in various regions of the world. In our view, that could have been achieved by moving the elements of analysis into the monthly report documents that are prepared by the delegations presiding over the Security Council.

In the past year we have seen how important the role of the Security Council is in today's system of international relations. Belarus favours the maintenance and strengthening of that status. We consider the Council to be the major element in the maintenance of international peace and security. Unquestionably, in order to remain the cornerstone of the existing system, the Council must act in keeping with today's realities. In that context, we see no alternative but to reform that body, which was established by the Charter. Moreover, that reform must be based on a consensus approach and promote the enhancement of the Council's effectiveness.

Making comprehensive changes to the Council based on the five negotiables, as set forth in decision 62/557, is one of the key steps to transforming the United Nations into an effective mechanism for responding efficiently to crisis situations. We cannot ignore the fact that negotiations on the question of Security Council reform have been going on for more than 20 years. The parties to the negotiating process have demonstrated determination and the seriousness of their intention to achieve a final result. However, no delegation could claim that those negotiations have produced any substantive outcome to date.

To achieve results, we need to demonstrate political will and flexibility. At the same time, we oppose hasty attempts to put to a vote documents that have not been studied in detail or gained broad support from States, or that may have a negative impact on future negotiations.

We believe that reform of the Security Council must lead to a more balanced and just apportionment of powers. We support an expansion in the number of seats in the Council in order to give all regional groups additional seats on the Council. We take note of the underrepresentation of the Eastern European Group among the non-permanent members of the Security Council and reaffirm our stated position on enhancing the representation of that Group among the permanent members of the Council.

We believe it is necessary to continue enhancing the transparency of the activity of the Security Council. We welcome the expansion of the practice of holding open debates and presidential briefings, including at the end of term. We believe that it would be useful to continue the development of that practice.

Maintaining the balance of the entire United Nations system is of the utmost importance. We therefore find inadmissible the unfounded interference by the Security Council in the areas of competence of the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Human Rights Council.

Mr. Charles (Trinidad and Tobago), Vice-President, took the Chair.

We see a need to have non-Council members be involved to a greater degree when decisions are taken affecting their interests, for the expansion of the practice of holding open meetings and for the organization of close interaction between the Sanctions Committees and the countries affected by sanctions.

Today, we are faced with the important objectives of reforming the United Nations as a whole and the Security Council in particular. Peace and the international order are changing at a dizzying pace. We simply have no moral right to waste yet another year in a negotiating process that is taking us nowhere. In that regard, Belarus calls on all parties to the negotiating process to demonstrate political will and readiness to compromise, which are crucial for the adoptions of the decisions needed to reform the Security Council and strengthen the Organization as a whole.

Mrs. DiCarlo (United States of America): I would like to thank the Security Council President, Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, for his presentation of the Council's annual report to the General Assembly (A/67/2), and Ambassador Néstor Osorio and the Colombian delegation for their preparation of the introduction to the report during their presidency of the Security Council in July.

The annual report provides all Member States with a transparent and comprehensive review of the Security Council's intensive work. We hope that the report continues to facilitate the exchange of information and enhance cooperation between the two coequal principal organs of the United Nations. The United States takes seriously the importance of making sure that all Member States are informed of and appropriately involved in the Council's work. In that regard, we are pleased to see that the Council held 222 formal meetings, of which 205 were public meetings, from August 2011 to July 2012. The United States is also committed to improving the working methods of the Council, and we continue to encourage increased interaction between Member

States and the Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions.

The Security Council first met in January 1946, under Australia's presidency. At that time, former Secretary of State and first United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Edward Stettinius, Jr., said that the General Assembly, inter alia, was responsible for building the kind of world in which lasting peace will be possible, and that the Security Council must see to it that the peace is kept. Nearly 67 years later, the members of the Council remain dedicated to that mission.

As the world's principal body for dealing with global security cooperation, the Council needs to reflect the realities of the new century. We recognize that various groups of Member States have presented proposals to add both permanent and non-permanent members, and also to add veto-wielding members. The United States is open in principle to a modest expansion of both permanent and non-permanent members, but we strongly believe that any consideration of an expansion of permanent members must be country-specific in nature. Moreover, the United States is not open to an enlargement of the Security Council that changes the current veto structure. Given that up to now no proposal has enjoyed consensus among us in the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform, we must continue to roll up our sleeves and discuss the way forward together.

To that end, the United States welcomes the continuation of the intergovernmental negotiations at this session of the General Assembly. The United States continues to view those negotiations as the best forum to build a path toward a reformed Security Council. In our last round of intergovernmental negotiations in July, the United States indicated that the way to find agreement is not through ultimatums, but through a step-by-step approach. We welcome Ambassador Tanin's continued role as chair of the negotiation process and trust that he will guide us on such a path. We assure him of our full cooperation.

It remains essential that we work together through the intergovernmental negotiations to overcome our differences and find a comprehensive solution that addresses the common aspirations of Member States. We very much look forward to continuing that dialogue with all Members.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria): I have the honour to present the position of Africa on behalf of the Committee of 10 of the African Union (AU) on the reform of the Security Council. I would like to thank the President for having convened this debate on agenda item 117. At the outset, allow me congratulate Ambassador Zahir Tanin upon his reappointment as chair of the intergovernmental negotiations and to express our appreciation for his efforts during past sessions.

I would like to reiterate the commitment of the member States of the African Union to this very important issue and state that we look forward to building on the progress made during the sixty-sixth session on the basis of General Assembly decision 65/554.

We are heartened that during the general debate of the General Assembly at its sixty-seventh session, many heads of State and Government and heads of delegation reaffirmed the need to reform the Security Council in order to make it more representative, democratic and legitimate. We must all therefore continue to seek the goal of reaching an early agreement on a reform model that takes into account the core values of the United Nations, namely, inclusiveness, democracy, accountability, equality and transparency.

It is becoming increasingly clear that after nearly two decades of debate, we seem to be gradually approaching a point where the United Nations will lose credibility if we fail to generate the political will necessary to make progress on this very crucial issue. We continue to urge Member States to be flexible in our common pursuit of a global governance system that is more representative, more democratic and more transparent.

Africa continues to engage in the intergovernmental negotiations with an open-door policy, aiming at correcting the historical injustice suffered by being the only continent not represented in the Security Council's permanent-member category and underrepresented in the non-permanent category. The Council remains at the centre of global governance in maintaining international peace and security. The 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) expressed the need to enhance the Council's representativeness, accountability and effectiveness and the legitimacy of its decisions, as well as the democratic nature of its decision-making process. Therefore, correcting the lingering historical injustice done to the continent becomes imperative and compelling.

To that end, we urge the wider United Nations membership to work with Africa to urgently address this injustice. We are committed to building alliances in support of the African common position with diverse interest groups and Member States engaged in the intergovernmental negotiations, in conformity with the mandate of the Committee of 10, with a view to achieving an early reform of the Security Council. In that pursuit, member States of the African Union were called upon to include the issue of Security Council reform among the priorities of their foreign policies.

Africa's position is a continental aspiration, which we believe all Member States and other stakeholders are now very familiar with. In that regard, it is important to recall that in 1945, when the United Nations was formed, most of Africa was not represented, and when the first reform took place in 1963, Africa was represented but at the time not considered for inclusion in the permanent category. Circumstances have changed since then, and it is merely simple justice for Africa to be fully represented in all decision-making organs of the United Nations, particularly in the Security Council. Full representation of Africa in the Security Council, according to the Ezulwini Consensus and the Sirte Declaration, means, first, acquiring no fewer than two permanent seats, with all the prerogatives and privileges of permanent membership, including the right of veto if it continues to exist. Secondly, we are claiming five non-permanent seats.

In the spirit of our commitment to address the issue of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other related matters, we must now seek agreement on how to move forward with revision 3 of the facilitator's compiled text. Various suggestions have been made about how to proceed with the document. While the chair of the intergovernmental negotiation process had, inter alia, called for the document to be edited, some Member States continue to call for it to be streamlined or shortened and/or to merge the positions. More recently, the facilitator, in his letter of 25 July 2012, recommended, among other things, the need for genuine give-and-take based on a concise document to be drafted by him and the holding of a high-level meeting on Security Council reform to assess the state of play and propose ways to keep the process moving forward.

Thus there is, first, a need for a general agreement on what to do with the text. We have not yet reached that agreement. Secondly, we need further clarification from the facilitator regarding the content and scope of his proposed concise document. Thirdly, we need the added value of the proposed high-level meeting, because we have not reached any agreement since the 2005 World Summit, when heads of State and Government called for an early reform of the Security Council. In our view, it will therefore be more useful for the facilitator to provide further clarifications on his recommendations.

Correcting the present imbalance in the composition of the Council with a view to making it into a more legitimate organ, primarily responsible for the maintenance of international peace and security, remains the collective responsibility of all Member States. We hope that this session will build on the progress made during the last session and will increase the pace for a more frank and lively debate, one that will be more flexible, compromising and decisive and will generate the necessary political will that would lead to a speedy reform of the Security Council, in accordance with the vision of our leaders at the 2005 World Summit.

Allow me to conclude by thanking the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative of India, for his presentation of the Council's annual report to the General Assembly (A/67/2), covering the activities of the Council for the period from 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2012. We look forward to an enhanced relationship between the Council and the General Assembly and improvement in the Council's working methods.

Mrs. Ribeiro Viotti (Brazil): We very much value the opportunity to discuss in the wider setting of the General Assembly the recent work of the Security Council and to reflect on ideas to make that body more representative, democratic and transparent.

Brazil aligns itself with the statement delivered earlier by Ambassador Raymond Wolfe, Permanent Representative of Jamaica, on behalf of the group of countries that sponsored draft resolution A/61/L.69/Rev.1.

We are glad to note that the annual report of the Security Council (A/67/2) highlights some of the efforts to increase the transparency of Council activities. Open debates, consultations with the troop- and police-contributing countries, field missions and outreach to country-specific configurations of the Peacebuilding Commission are all important attempts to promote inclusiveness and enhance the effectiveness of the Council's decisions.

However, a more representative Security Council, aligned with current political realities, will be achieved only through a real reform of its current structure. That goal has been consistently advocated by a large majority of Member States, as the debates on the subject held during the Assembly's last session once again demonstrated. A large majority has also expressed support for an expansion of the Council in both categories of membership and for improvement of its methods of work.

Together with its partners in the Group of Four and the L.69 group, Brazil has been a staunch supporter of the intergovernmental negotiations since their inception. We reiterate our commitment to that process. The time has come, however, to begin a new phase in our talks. The new phase should be result-oriented and characterized by real and substantive negotiations. For that to happen, it is essential that a negotiating document with fewer options and a focus on ideas that have garnered broad support from Member States be prepared. A concise negotiating document is pivotal to kick-start the process and to lead us to tangible results.

In his letter dated 25 July the chair of the intergovernmental negotiations, Ambassador Zahir Tanin, presented his assessment of the work undertaken during the last General Assembly session and conveyed recommendations that, in Brazil's view, constitute a sound basis for our future work. We commend him for that initiative. The letter provides us with a clear set of options that may allow us to move forward and seek tangible progress. In line with his proposals, we are ready to enter into real negotiations with a view to achieving a meaningful reform.

Progress in Security Council reform is long overdue. It is our hope that the intergovernmental negotiations will be resumed soon, building on the progress achieved so far, including the inputs offered by Member States and the recommendations presented by the chair. In this regard, we welcome the letter by the President of the General Assembly dated 9 November, in which he was reappointed Ambassador Tanin to continue to chair the negotiations in the plenary of the General Assembly. Brazil is ready to cooperate with Mr. Tanin in his work.

Allow me to conclude by thanking the President for his leadership of the General Assembly during the current session.

Mr. Kim Sook (Republic of Korea): At the outset, I would like to thank the President for convening this important meeting of the General Assembly regarding the annual report of the Security Council (A/67/2) and the issue of Security Council reform. Allow me to extend my deepest appreciation to the membership of the General Assembly, which rendered its valuable support to the candidature of the Republic of Korea for a non-permanent seat on the Security Council for the term 2013 and 2014.

The Security Council was actively engaged in tackling a great number of challenges all around the world during the reporting period. It remained the most relied-upon organ for the international community in the field of international peace and security. The Council's vigorous engagement was indispensable in enhancing peace and moving the political process forward in such places as Somalia, the Sudan and South Sudan, and Timor-Leste.

We have seen encouraging developments in Somalia, where the Council's support for the transition process, in cooperation with the African Union, has laid solid groundwork for the establishment of a legitimate Government.

The firm action by the Council, as envisaged in its unanimously adopted resolution 2046 (2012), countered the escalation of violence between the Sudan and South Sudan and enabled the negotiations on unresolved issues to make progress. The Republic of Korea, for its part, intends to contribute to stability and reconstruction in the region by sending a 300-member engineering corps to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan in coming months.

In Timor-Leste, the active involvement of the United Nations in the country's efforts to achieve peace and stability since 1999 is now drawing to a successful end. We believe that such successful engagement by the international community in the form of United Nations peacekeeping operations — a peace investment that pays off, with a clear-cut exit — needs to be emulated.

The Republic of Korea also appreciates the work of the Security Council in managing the developments during the course of the Arab Spring in countries ranging from Libya to Yemen. We note the adoption of the Council resolutions regarding Libya, including 2009 (2011) and 2016 (2011), which offer a political basis for improving the security situation in the country. We also welcome resolutions 2014 (2011) and 2051 (2012), on the political transition in Yemen.

Syria remains the biggest peace and security challenge of the day. The Republic of Korea is deeply concerned about the mass killings of civilians and gross violations of human rights in Syria. We commend the efforts of the Joint Special Envoy of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria and the Security Council-mandated United Nations Supervision Mission in the Syrian Arab Republic with a view to the implementation of the six-point proposal during the reporting period. We truly hope the Council will be able to build unity and act decisively on this tragic and long-standing issue, which has significant repercussions for regional security.

Regarding the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question, the Republic of Korea fully supports the two-State solution, a vision in which Israel and Palestine live side by side in peace and prosperity. We hope that a peaceful, negotiated resolution to the matter will be reached in the near future with the support of the international community.

Among other concerns before the international community are the challenges to the constitutional order in democracy. We are worried about the military coups that occurred in Mali and Guinea-Bissau earlier this year and welcome the firm actions by the Security Council, as shown in its resolutions 2056 (2012) and 2048 (2012), respectively. It is also worrying that the activities of armed elements destabilize the peace and stability in fragile regions, with the Mouvement du 23 mars — the M-23 — in the eastern part of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Lord's Resistance Army in the Central African region and armed rebel groups in northern Mali being the cases in point. We hope the Security Council will remain firm and vigilant in responding to such destabilizing forces.

On the issue of non-proliferation, the Republic of Korea welcomes and supports the Council's swift adoption of the presidential statement on North Korea's launch of a long-range missile in April 2012 (S/PRST/2012/13). We particularly note that the statement strongly condemned the launch, underscored that it was a serious violation of Security Council resolutions 1718 (2006) and 1874 (2009), and expressed the Council's determination to take action accordingly in the event of a further launch or nuclear test by North Korea. We also take note of the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which includes the designation of additional entities subject to sanctions measures in May 2012.

On international cooperation for non-proliferation, the Republic of Korea appreciates the growing role of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004), as shown in Council resolution 2055 (2012). We also welcome the presidential statement on nuclear security (S/PRST/2012/14), in April.

The Republic of Korea also values the work of the Security Council on thematic and cross-cutting issues. We welcome the Council's increasing engagement in issues concerning women and peace and security, children and armed conflict, and post-conflict peacebuilding. We believe that the Council should make greater efforts in identifying the linkages between the thematic issues and country-specific situations, keeping the issues more focused and action-oriented so as to make a substantial contribution to improving the situation on the ground.

During the reporting period, the Council has undertaken notable efforts to enhance the participation of the wider membership in its work, including by increasing the number of public meetings and providing monthly briefings by its President. It should continue to strengthen such efforts towards openness and transparency.

The Council should also work on expanding its relationships and enhancing cooperation with regional and subregional organizations. Cooperation with regional institutions has become all the more essential for finding appropriate solutions to crises and conflicts and for making optimal use of resources and capacities.

On the issue of Security Council reform, the Republic of Korea believes that the only plausible way to bring about a more representative, accountable, democratic and effective Council is through holding periodic elections. Periodic elections are essential in ensuring the democratic principle, which lies at the heart of the legitimacy of reforming the Council. Reform should be firmly based on a membership-driven and comprehensive approach, as stipulated in decision 62/557. We look forward to the stewardship of Ambassador Tanin as chair of the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform so that we can achieve concrete progress during the current session of the General Assembly.

The Republic of Korea, as a non-permanent member of the Security Council for 2013-2014, will spare no efforts in striving to enhance the accountability, transparency and efficiency of the Council.

Mr. Visconti (France) (*spoke in French*): Allow me first to express my appreciation for the introductory statement of the President of the Security Council, Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri, and for his presentation of the annual report of the Security Council (A/67/2). I would also like to thank the Permanent Representative of Colombia, who, as Council President in July, prepared that important report to the General Assembly. With his team, he has seen to it that the report reflects the Council's work in a complete and transparent manner. I also wish to thank the Secretariat, which supported that process. I take this opportunity to take note of the high quality of the Council's new website, which contains updated information in all languages on the activity of the Security Council. That is also progress that benefits the entire Organization.

The growing quality of the Council's reports to the Assembly is a demonstration of the continuing improvement of Council's working methods, to the benefit of all States Members of our Organization. In that context, France appreciates the work of the Council's Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions, which this year, under the guidance of the Ambassador of Portugal, whom I congratulate here, has made numerous improvements possible. In particular, we support the thinking on genuine publicity for the debates, especially on issues of general interest, on dialogue with the troop-contributing countries and on a better taking into account of the fight against impunity in the Council's work.

The upcoming public debate on working methods under the Indian presidency of the Council will be an opportunity to exchange views with all States on the topic. On that occasion France will come back to the idea of the Council's permanent members jointly renouncing the use of the veto when the Council is seized with mass crimes and atrocities.

Beyond the improvement of its working methods, we know that reform of the Council's working methods is necessary. Many of us here have been saying that for 20 years now. To further reflect the reality of today's world, to more closely adapt to new challenges while remaining in a position to fully shoulder its responsibilities given the crises now threatening international peace and security, the Security Council must undergo an ambitious reform.

The process of intergovernmental negotiations headed by Ambassador Tanin has allowed us to make progress in our thinking. The eighth round of negotiations has made our debates more dynamic with respect to the initiatives presented by Member States or groups of Member States. That impetus must not be lost; the path charted by the facilitator should be explored through a collective effort of the Member States. In that spirit, France welcomes the decision of the President of the General Assembly to reappoint Ambassador Tanin as facilitator. We will need to work on the basis of the latest proposals.

France, for its part, supports the enlargement of the Security Council in both categories of membership. Our demands have not changed — reform of the Council must take into account the emergence of new Powers that have both the will and the capability to shoulder responsibility for a permanent presence in the Council and that, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, are in a position to make a significant contribution to the Council's action in the maintenance of international peace and security. It is in that context that France supports a strengthened presence of African countries, including among the permanent members, as well as the candidacies of Germany, Brazil, Japan and India for permanent seats.

The reform of the Security Council must not be relegated to the background of our priorities. With the active and much-appreciated assistance of the facilitator, Ambassador Tanin, it is in the Assembly President's power to provide a decisive impetus to the discussions. France, like numerous other States in the General Assembly, stands ready to work actively to resolve impasses. France will make its contribution and provide its support as we continue our work.

Mr. AlJarallah (Kuwait) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, my country's delegation extends with great pleasure its thanks and appreciation to the President of the Security Council for the current month, the Permanent Representative of India, for the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly (A/67/2), as well as for the information on the activities of the Security Council for the past year, which indicates a noticeable increase in the Council's workload. We are also pleased to congratulate the friendly countries that have been elected new members of the Council for 2013 and 2014: Argentina, Australia, Luxembourg, the Republic of Korea and Rwanda.

We emphasize our support for the statement delivered by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. We welcome and appreciate Ambassador Tanin's efforts in leading the work of the intergovernmental negotiations. We hope to see in the current session tangible progress on the issue of Security Council reform and to realize the long-awaited historic achievement that meets the expectations of all of us to energize the Council and improve its performance.

It is appropriate that the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council and related matters should be one of the most important items on the Assembly's agenda at a time when there is an urgent need to take articulated, decisive positions that contribute to pushing forward the process of Security Council reform. Although there is a consensus among Member States on the principle of change and reform, we nevertheless have not yet been able to agree on the substance of the needed changes.

In that context, we emphasize the importance of requiring that any suggestions relating to the expansion and reform of the Security Council obtain general approval from all Member States. Over the 20 years that have passed since the opening of negotiations on expanding the membership of the Council and improving its methods of work, numerous initiatives and ideas have been put forward. However, the way remains obstructed. Political will is required for a convergence of views that might allow us to reach the desired goals. Repeated challenges in the international political arena should drive us to exert more pressure to improve the course of negotiations and affirm the importance of collective work.

In recent years, the State of Kuwait's position on the process of reforming the Security Council has remained consistent, based as it is on the five established points.

First, Security Council reform must be in accordance with the general perception that the process of reforming and developing all United Nations bodies should be continued with a view to greater integration and balance in the work of the Organization. Also, the process must focus on the role of the Security Council in relation to other United Nations bodies such as the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, in order to curb the tendency to encroach on their areas of competence. The Council's role must be confined to the fulfilment of its functions as mandated by the Charter of the United Nations, in other words, the maintenance of international peace and security.

Secondly, any ideas for Security Council reform must stem from the keen interests of all Members, in order to make the Council more representative of the entire membership of the United Nations and to reflect current international realities, which have changed so much since the Organization was established in 1945.

Thirdly, it is crucial that we work on improving the Council's methods and ways of working, making them clearer and more transparent. This should include a list of formal and permanent working procedures aimed at improving and organizing the Council's working methods.

Fourthly, the right to the veto should be codified by regulating and limiting it through, for example, excluding the possibility of a veto except on matters that fall under Chapter VII of the Charter.

Fifthly, any expansion of the number of seats on the Security Council must allow smaller States increased opportunities for membership and participation in the Council's work. It must not overlook the rights of Arab and Muslim States, in accordance with their number and importance and the contribution they make to defending the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations.

The rapidly increasing challenges that the international community is facing around the world should make us all the more determined to strengthen and revitalize the role of the Security Council so as to make it more capable and effective in meeting and overcoming those challenges and to ensure that it functions in a more representative, transparent, impartial and credible way.

Mr. Seger (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): We thank the President for this opportunity to discuss the annual report of the Security Council (A/67/2). As we know, it is the only occasion on which the General Assembly can assess the Council's work in the area of peace and security.

We have before us a 275-page document that covers the Security Council's activities for the past year. We first wish to thank Colombia for its significant effort in compiling the report and the Permanent Representative of India for his capable presentation. In that regard, we would like to encourage future Council Presidents to furnish the principal author of the report with monthly analytical assessments that can then provide input for exchanges between the Council and Member States as a whole in the framework of the report's preparation.

The President of the Council concluded his statement by inviting us to make suggestions for improving the report. I would be glad to respond to that invitation, but after reading the report and having gone over my speech from last year, I must admit that I am somewhat in the position of Senator Cato, who continued to repeat the same message over and over in the Roman Senate with the famous words "*Ceterum censeo*" — "Moreover, I think".

Moreover, I think, first, that in particular the link between the geographic and thematic contexts being dealt with could be strengthened. Such subjects as children in armed conflict, the protection of civilians, and women and peace and security are not abstract but are directly linked to specific places and regions.

My second *Ceterum censeo* refers to the lack of a systematic approach to certain cross-cutting issues. To cite one example, the Council's protection architecture presents opportunities for improvement. A study by the NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security — a kind of shadow report supported by Switzerland — demonstrates this shortcoming. The study also shows that such subjects become less important especially at times when there is a question of rapid intervention at a moment of crisis or deterioration — exactly when the risk of serious human rights violations is greatest.

To go back to the preparation of the report itself, we are pleased to see that discussions of structure are included and are continuing, because the report constitutes a vital element in the reform of the Security Council's working methods. In that regard, we particularly thank Portugal for its valuable work in chairing the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions. We are also pleased that India is organizing an open debate on the Council's working methods on 26 November, and we urge all Member States to participate in those discussions. It will provide an excellent opportunity for all of us to go into those issues in depth and in more detail.

The report reflects a year that was particularly rich in events before the Security Council. As is always the case, there are both positive and negative points. We commend the Council's work on the Sudan and South Sudan, as well as resolution 2046 (2012), which made it possible to ensure regular monitoring of the situation there and which is an example of good cooperation with a regional organization. It is no exaggeration to say that the Security Council contributed in a substantive manner to avoiding an escalation of the conflict.

In the same way, after the coups d'état in Mali and Guinea-Bissau, the Council responded with one voice. In the Sahel region, however, much remains to be done, given the great tension there, and we therefore encourage the Council to continue to follow that situation very closely and not to give priority to a military approach over a political one.

It is important to become involved at a preliminary stage of a conflict, and that is true for every region of the world. If the Council can react early and preventively, it should do so. Horizon-scanning is an excellent tool for that purpose. The monthly survey by the Department of Political Affairs should be used systematically by every presidency of the Council.

Finally, if a conflict continues to deteriorate, as in the case of Syria, the Council, under the Charter of the United Nations, is obliged to act, particularly by halting atrocities regardless of who is committing them. I recall our firm conviction that in a situation where there are allegations of mass atrocities, the permanent members of the Council should renounce their right to the veto. I congratulate France on being willing to do that on condition that the others do the same. Here Switzerland holds to its belief that the perpetrators of such atrocities must be brought to justice. That is why my country has taken the initiative of sending a letter to the Council asking it to send the Syrian situation to the International Criminal Court, so that a Syrian criminal process that is independent, equitable and transparent process could be quickly established.

I hope that the Security Council will not merely be listening to Member States' suggestions and recommendations, but will also take their recommendations seriously into account and modify its working methods as a result. I would be pleased, during the presentation of the Council's report in 2013, to be able to abandon my role of Cato to play that of Galileo Galilei and say of the Security Council *eppur si muove* — that it has, in fact, moved.

Mr. Osorio (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would first like to discuss agenda item 30, on the annual report of the Security Council (A/67/2). I am grateful for the convening of this meeting. I would also like to thank the Ambassador of India, Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri, for his presentation of the report to the Assembly. Likewise, we express our thanks to all members of the Security Council for their valuable contribution and support in the task that fell to the delegation of Colombia of preparing part of the report before us. The Secretariat made a substantive contribution, as always, so we thank the staff as well.

The report gives an account of a complex period in the international context, with some situations in which internal and external factors limited Council action. The loss of human life we had to face is regrettable and deplorable. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that in several cases many other lives were saved, including where whole peoples were protected and respect for and defence of fundamental rights were promoted, while institutions were strengthened and civilians at risk were protected in countries where peace, stability and constitutional order were faltering.

The results during the reporting period show that communication and constructive deliberations are irreplaceable tools for the prevention and resolution of conflicts. We are pleased that the dialogue with heads of State and high-level representatives from around the world was fluent and active, thanks to their participation in high-level Council meetings, and about the missions carried out by Council members so that the destiny of regions such as the Horn of Africa and Central Africa could be viewed with greater hope. The same can be said of the progress in democratic stability in Côte d'Ivoire, Haiti and Timor-Leste, countries in which the United Nations will have to step up efforts to support their social development and institutional consolidation.

Similarly, in our opinion, consultations and understandings within the Council and beyond allowed for progress in situations such as that in Libya, which was able to begin the process of transforming institutions and ensuring a democratic future for its people. The international community will have to be attentive to supporting its requirements for strengthening its national capacities, in keeping with its sovereign decisions.

Dialogue was also developed with regard to thematic issues that figure ever more on the agenda. Peacekeeping and peacebuilding, the rule of law, cooperation with regional and subregional organizations, conflict prevention, children and armed conflict, the protection of civilians, women and peace and security, and peacebuilding were matters that we consider relevant in the work of the Council. In this regard, we remain convinced that we should pay attention to the criteria for the inclusion, consideration and scope of those thematic issues so that only those properly falling within the Council competence are debated by it.

As I have already mentioned, the question of unity in the Council is one and the same as the raison d'être of the Council. Without unity, paralysis prevails. We have seen how the lack of unity affects the resolution of important issues. Where progress has been made, it was thanks to unity, including when there were different opinions, which shows that this is the only way to maintain and build international peace and security when they are threatened or violated. The Council must work further in this area, in the sure knowledge that in doing so it will be able to respond more robustly to the matters on its agenda.

The question of perfecting the working methods of the Security Council is a topic we consider ever more necessary. Relations between the Council and the General Assembly and broadening their cooperation are of crucial importance not only because of the significance of the political universality that the Assembly represents but also because matters before the Council would benefit from additional perspective for their consideration and effective solution, which would lead to greater transparency and a virtuous cycle that would benefit both Member States and the Organization.

Similarly, based on our own experience, we deem it advisable that opportunities be provided for an exchange of views between the membership of the Organization and the country to which falls the responsibility to draft the Council's annual report. Colombia, convinced of the usefulness of such exchange, met on 30 July with a large number of countries in a public gathering so as to hear their suggestions, observations and comments.

The subsidiary bodies and the groups of experts require more precise regulations. They frequently encounter difficulties as a result of differing interpretations regarding applicable practices.

To close this topic, I would suggest that the Council deepen its dialogue with bodies of the system charged with promoting education, science, culture, agriculture, education, health and other concerns with a view to making its peacebuilding actions more coherent with the efforts, programmes, plans and projects being carried out by those bodies in the countries leaving the Council's agenda. In that way the recurrence of conflicts and situations that led to the involvement of the Council can be avoided.

I will now turn to agenda item 117, regarding reform of the Council.

First, let me thank the President of the General Assembly for his communication of 9 November informing us of the confirmation of Ambassador Zahir Tanin as coordinator of the intergovernmental negotiations. On behalf of my Government, I wish to congratulate Ambassador Tanin on his reappointment and to assure him and the President of our intention to work at his side and to collaborate to our fullest ability to ensure that this process maintains the momentum and energy achieved in recent years. Leadership, impartiality and neutrality are qualities of fundamental importance for building confidence among members and ensuring that consultations are productive throughout the process.

The Government of Colombia assigns the greatest importance to the process of Security Council reform. For several years we have joined forces with a representative group of countries from all continents having a common goal: to ensure that any modifications to the Charter of the United Nations relating to the composition and functioning of the Security Council are the product of general consensus acceptable to each and every State. Members of the Uniting for Consensus group have declared that we will work tirelessly to achieve a general agreement, which is the only way to achieve a reform that would be satisfactory to the international community as a whole. As a member of the group, Colombia has a well-known position: we advocate the continuation of the process of intergovernmental negotiations on the basis of the consensus achieved in 2008, as reflected in decision 62/557.

Experience has shown that reform must be comprehensive, transparent, balanced and equitable and that it must reflect the interests and needs of all Member States. Developing States must be better represented in the Security Council. In particular, the Uniting for Consensus group has acknowledged on several occasions that Africa has a legitimate aspiration to seek a more just representation in the Council. The group has also shown considerable flexibility and has repeatedly stated that it is open to accepting compromise solutions. For that reason, following the discussion held over the past year in the intergovernmental negotiating process, the members of Uniting for Consensus are moving forward with an internal discussion that seeks to consider and evaluate the comments made by various delegations on our model for reform.

On the other hand, the composition and categories of membership are only some of the elements covered in decision 62/557, which is a package deal, to which we attach the greatest importance. We therefore oppose attempts to prioritize one or several of those elements to the detriment of others as part of initiatives that, while they may have been inspired by selfless motivations, represent in practice an abandonment of a previously reached consensus.

We believe that in the current circumstances, it would be a step in the right direction for Member States to discuss and agree, under the guidance of the Coordinator, on a calendar of work that would allow us to make progress in the process in a clear and transparent way. In our capacity as a member of Uniting for Consensus, Colombia stands ready to participate fully in that process.

Mr. Wittig (Germany): I would like to join my colleagues in thanking Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri of India for having introduced the report of the Security Council (A/67/2) and Ambassador Néstor Osorio of Colombia and his team for having compiled the report presented today. Having completed the same task last year as Security Council President in July, I can attest to the arduous work that it entails.

Of the numerous issues on the Council's agenda over the past year, the situation in Syria stands out. Unfortunately, it does so because of what the Council did not do, rather than what it did. We deplore the Council's failure to agree on an effective common approach. That has further aggravated the plight of the Syrian people and it led many in the international community and our respective peoples to ask whether the Security Council in its current form is still able to live up to the responsibilities entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations.

That has also added to the already growing frustration among Member States due to the deadlock on Council reform. Last year, in the General Assembly, even partial, modest progress was made impossible on the improvement of the Council's working methods, which is something we sincerely deplore. Against that background, we would have preferred two separate debates to be have been held, on the annual report and on Security Council reform, respectively, given that both issues deserve the undivided attention of the General Assembly.

On 9 October, the Ambassadors of the Group of Four (G-4) transmitted to the President of the General Assembly a letter containing the joint statement made by the G-4 Foreign Ministers on the margins of the general debate. The letter was also shared with all Member States. I therefore do not need to repeat its content in detail. Let me reiterate, however, the dedication of the G-4 Foreign Ministers to achieving together an early reform of the Security Council. The Ministers also called for a concrete outcome at the present session of the General Assembly and expressed their commitment to continue to work towards that end in a spirit of flexibility and in close cooperation with other Member States. Germany, individually and as part of the G-4, stands ready to continue our engagement with the President of the General Assembly, The chair, Ambassador Tanin, and Member States.

The strong support for genuine reform of the Council — which is what the G-4 stands for — was again evident during the last round of negotiations. The majority of the delegations that took the floor — from small and large countries, from the developing and the developed world — clearly called for an expansion of the Council in both categories, the permanent and the non-permanent.

We look forward to the resumption of the intergovernmental negotiations as soon as possible. We welcome the decision to reappoint Ambassador Tanin as chair. We are confident that he will continue to steer the process forward in an objective and results-oriented manner.

The agenda for the negotiations is clear. The chair has submitted his assessment of the process to date together with a set of constructive proposals on how to move the process forward. The proposals were circulated by the preceding President of the General Assembly to all Member States and were acknowledged by the General Assembly in its oral decision in September (see A/66/PV.129). They are now on the table and form an integral part of the negotiation process. Let us begin discussing those proposals and see how we can best make them operational. We are confident that that will help us to finally move towards real negotiations on this important matter.

Mr. Kodama (Japan): At the outset, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for having convened the present plenary meeting to discuss Security Council reform, combined with the report of the Security Council to the General Assembly (A/67/2). Japan highly appreciates the fact that the President of the General Assembly has identified United Nations reform, which includes Security Council reform and the revitalization of the General Assembly, as one of his priorities during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly. I would also like to commend his reappointment of Ambassador Zahir Tanin as the chair of the intergovernmental negotiations. We sincerely hope that the President of the General Assembly and Ambassador Tanin, as chair of the intergovernmental negotiations, will exercise legitimate leadership in guiding us to promote substantive and meaningful discussions among Member States.

No one doubts the necessity of Security Council reform. Various efforts have been made to make the Security Council more representative, legitimate and effective. It is regrettable, however, that the issue has not seen much progress over the decades. Let us recall that the 2005 World Summit and its Outcome Document (resolution 60/1) set Member States the task of realizing early reform of the Security Council. Yet, seven years on from the World Summit, we have failed to achieve any reform of the Security Council at all. In that regard, Japan would like to remind every Member State that we have a collective responsibility to translate our political leaders' commitment into concrete Security Council reform.

The present intergovernmental negotiation process has been ongoing for nearly four years, and we have exhausted every conceivable discussion pertaining to items on the agenda. Thanks to Ambassador Tanin's leadership during the last round of negotiations, we have already acquired a clear and deep understanding of each group's position on this issue. And we must note that an overwhelming majority of Member States voiced support for the expansion of the Security Council in both categories of membership, the permanent and the non-permanent. Now is the time for all Member States to intensify the negotiations with a view to achieving a concrete outcome in the next round — the ninth — of the intergovernmental negotiations.

At the closing of sixty-sixth session of the General Assembly, we Member States decised to roll over the issue to the current session (see A/66/PV.129), while taking note of the recommendations by the chair of the intergovernmental negotiations, contained in his letter of 25 July. In that regard, Japan believes that in order to have a meaningful and constructive negotiation in the next round of intergovernmental negotiations, it is important for the negotiation to be conducted in line with the recommendations. Japan duly acknowledges those recommendations as "reflections" of the chair, who has guided the process forward over the past four years. In particular, Japan believes that one of his recommendations — the drafting of a concise working document — should be carried out as a crucial step to move the process forward to realizing the reform. To that end, Japan requests all Member States to engage in that important task. Of course, Japan is fully committed to contributing to that collective work.

Japan's commitment has also been demonstrated as part of the collective political will of the reform-oriented and results-driven Group of Four (G-4). The G-4 Foreign Ministers met in New York on 25 September and reiterated their determination to work in close cooperation and in a spirit of flexibility with other Member States on genuine text-based negotiations. The Ministers also expressed their determination to inject greater political momentum into the process, including with a view to holding a high-level meeting on Security Council reform, as stated in the recommendations of the chair of the intergovernmental negotiations, Ambassador Tanin. Japan is of the view that such a meeting should take place in 2013, thereby commemorating the fifth anniversary of the intergovernmental negotiation process.

I shall now turn to another agenda item, namely, the annual report of the Security Council to the General Assembly. I would like to express my sincere appreciation to Ambassador Hardeep Singh Puri of India, President of the Security Council this month, for his presentation of the report, as well as to Ambassador Néstor Osorio of Colombia and his staff for their work in preparing the report. Japan reiterates the importance of the annual report being improved and submitted to the General Assembly, in keeping with presidential note S/2010/507. We call for the relevant provisions of the note to be followed accordingly. We believe that the report not only strengthens relations between these two important organs of the United Nations but also plays an important role in ensuring the accountability and transparency of the Council. That obviously pertains to improving the working methods of the Security Council, which is one of the five clusters of Council reform. In that regard, Japan welcomes the holding of the debate in the General Assembly today and the informal consultative meeting with non-members of the Security Council on this matter on 30 July.

With regard to the contents of the annual report, Japan considers it comprehensive and descriptive. It comprises regional issues as well as thematic issues, such as post-conflict peacebuilding, children and armed conflict and some legal issues. It also contains information from other meetings, such as informal interactive dialogues with non-members, other United Nations organs and regional organizations. Japan commends the format and description of the report, which enhance the clarity of the Council's work in the report and will eventually further improve the transparency of the Council. We would have hoped to see the inclusion in the report of greater background information on the events on which the Council worked. We hope that continued efforts will be made to strengthen the substantive aspects of the report, including by improving the monthly assessments that form the basis of the introduction. At the same time, more efforts are needed to make the report even more concise.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate once again Japan's firm commitment to exert all efforts to achieve a concrete reform outcome during the present session, working in close cooperation with the President of the General Assembly, Ambassador Tanin and all Member States. I would also like to request that members of the Security Council continue their efforts in ensuring accountability, transparency and effectiveness in the Council's work. In that regard, we commend the contribution made by Portugal during the past year as the Chair of the Informal Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions.

Mr. Schaper (Netherlands): Thank you, Sir, for giving me the opportunity to make a short statement on behalf of the Kingdom of Belgium and the Kingdom of the Netherlands on the question of Security Council reform.

First of all, I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly for his decision to reappoint Ambassador Tanin as chair of the intergovernmental negotiation process. Belgium and the Netherlands applaud that decision and will fully support Ambassador Tanin in his continuing efforts to take the discussion to the next level, both on process and on content. We call upon the membership to adopt the same attitude.

In its meeting of 13 September (see A/66/PV.129), the General Assembly took an important step by prolonging the mandate of the open-ended working group, in particular by taking note of the proposals of the chair of the intergovernmental negotiations. In particular, we would like to highlight Ambassador Tanin's recommendation to take what he called the next logical step by having a genuine give-and-take based on a concise working document. Ambassador Tanin also recommended that such a working document should be drafted by the chair, on the basis of consultations with Member States, in keeping with the membership-driven character of the process. From the perspective of Belgium and the Netherlands, that recommendation could be a sound basis for our further work and mark the beginning of the next phase of the negotiations.

Belgium and the Netherlands are both committed to continue to support further discussion where and when possible, to keep up the momentum that has been generated, and to assist the membership to reach concrete results at the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

Our position is not based on the wish to achieve a specific national objective or defend a specific national interest. What drives us is the goal of an effective, modernized and more legitimate Security Council that reflects the geopolitical realities of the twenty-first century, which in turn would also contribute to a more credible United Nations and a strengthened international system.

Mr. Parham (United Kingdom): The United Kingdom is pleased to make a statement in this annual joint debate on the Security Council report and the question of Security Council reform. We are grateful for the efforts of our Colombian colleagues, who so meticulously compiled this year's report (A/67/2), as well as for Ambassador Singh Puri's introduction.

The Assembly has heard from the President of the Security Council some of the achievements of the Council in the past year: supporting the African Union Mission in Somalia and helping Somalia back onto its feet; working with the African Union to encourage the Sudan and South Sudan to come to the negotiating table; and ensuring that the people of Timor-Leste can build sustainable peace. The Assembly has also heard of some of its failures this year, foremost among which is Syria. The failure of the Security Council to take firm action to end the violence in Syria underlines the crucial importance of ensuring that the Council not only represents the modern world but is able and willing to fulfil its core task of maintaining the world's peace and security.

The United Kingdom expresses its gratitude to Ambassador Tanin for his tireless efforts to steer the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform over the past year. We welcome his reappointment as chair. We appreciate his commitment to working with all Member States to make progress. While it is clear that there is not yet sufficient consensus on this issue, we are ready to continue working in the coming months to find elements upon which wider agreement might be found.

Member States will need to approach that task in a spirit of compromise. Security Council reform is a difficult and complex issue. We are all well aware of the many competing and strongly held views of different Member States. But we believe that there is sufficient common ground on the fundamental need for reform for us to be able to move forward in the intergovernmental negotiations.

The United Kingdom's position on Security Council reform is well known. We continue to support permanent membership for Brazil, India, Germany and Japan and permanent African representation. At the same time, it is our firm view that reform must not reduce the Council's ability to act decisively when called upon to address threats to international peace and security.

While we have our own view of what Security Council reform should look like, we are open to exploring the ideas of other Member States, if there is the possibility of taking a step in the right direction. We must all remain ready to seize opportunities to achieve consensus. The United Kingdom is willing to work constructively with those who believe that progress is possible.

The United Kingdom believes that the Council needs to operate in a manner that is as transparent, open and as effective as possible, which is why we continue to be at the forefront of efforts to improve Council working methods. We actively encourage greater interaction between Council members during consultations and support the greater use of technology and social media, both to improve the efficiency of what the Council does and to open up its workings to a wider global audience.

We shall continue to be unequivocal supporters of Security Council reform. I hope that, during the present session of the General Assembly, we find the collective will to make some progress.

Mr. Ulibarri (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Let me begin by expressing our appreciation to the Ambassador of India and President of the Security Council for introducing the Council's annual report to the General Assembly (A/67/2). We also commend Colombia for its excellent work in writing the introduction and compiling the report. We note the Security Council's efforts to present a more concise document with certain analytical elements. We encourage further progress along those lines. We also commend the fact that Ambassador Zahir Tanin continues to lead the intergovernmental negotiations on Security Council reform. Costa Rica renews its commitment to working towards and making a constructive contribution to that process.

Throughout the world, transparency and accountability are increasingly becoming more than mere aspirations. In a positive development, they have become imperatives, not only for States but also for corporations, non-governmental organizations and the international community that is gathered here today. In honour of that ideal of transparency and in the interest of the effectiveness and representativeness of the Organization, the balance of power between the General Assembly and the Security Council needs, now more than ever, to be restored, as enshrined in the Charter.

According to the Charter, the Security Council acts on behalf of all of the Member States and has the primary responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. It is therefore obvious that the Council must inform the Assembly in a timely manner of its actions, or lack thereof, so that all Member States have the chance to exercise the necessary control and, should the need arise, take any corrective measures called for.

That is why it is important that the annual reports of the Council not be limited to retrospective accounts of actions taken, as is the case with the document that we have before us today. Such documents should be more analytical, and they should include projections. They should take a more self-critical stance, and they should include an assessment of the effectiveness of measures taken by the Council and the positions taken by its members in adopting them, as well as lessons learned, challenges and possible future strategies. In other words, they should transmit a larger, more transparent and more useful exercise in accountability.

To that effect, we call for the Security Council to present special reports to the General Assembly, in accordance with paragraph 3 of Article 24 of the Charter, each time the Council decides to establish a new peacekeeping operation, substantially modifies an operation's mandate or creates a new set of sanctions. We also believe that the Security Council should present a report to the General Assembly each time a resolution is vetoed and that the permanent members that exercised the veto should explain to the entire membership the reasons behind their decision.

That last point is particularly relevant in the current global political climate, in which the promotion and strengthening of the rule of law is paramount to maintaining international peace and security, as was evident in the Security Council's debate of 17 October (see S/PV.6849). In the era of information and accountability, we must strive to garner the necessary political willingness to achieve fluid, efficient and comprehensive communication among all of the actors in the United Nations. The legitimacy and effectiveness of the multilateral system depends in large part on such communication.

Security Council reform should be an opportunity to transform the United Nations into a more effective and representative Organization. Reform should drive sound and balanced decisions, in which we can all feel that we are the partners and sponsors. Reform should strive to improve the capacity of the United Nations to respond effectively and legitimately to threats to international peace and security. It cannot and should not be a mechanism for favouring some States over others that are equally sovereign. It should be an exercise in flexibility, commitment and the search for improved representativeness. For that reason, we do not consider it appropriate to increase the number of permanent members. We lean towards an increase in the non-permanent category, with longer terms and the possibility of re-election. That is, in essence, the position of the Uniting for Consensus group, to which we belong.

For Costa Rica, reform should also include regulation, limitation and the eventual elimination of the veto power — a privilege that has often paralysed the Council and has contributed substantially to undermining its legitimacy, especially in cases involving heinous crimes against humanity. We note and welcome the growing awareness in the international community with regard to that subject.

Costa Rica also considers it indispensable to permanently improve the Security Council's working methods. Such a procedural improvement should not be conditional on a comprehensive reform. On the contrary, such improvement should be a constant responsibility, above all the reponsibility of the five permanent Council members but also of its elected members and all States Members of the United Nations.

More frequent and higher-quality reports, improved transparency, timely accountability, more equal distribution of internal responsibilities and basic limits on the use of the veto are among the improvements in working methods that should be relentlessly pursued. In our national capacity, as a member of the group of five small nations and in partnership with other Member States, we will continue to work constructively towards those goals.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The question of Security Council reform is central to the general reform agenda of our global Organization. That particular reform deals with one of Organization's principal bodies, which, according to the Charter, bears the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. The decision taken in the matter will, to a great extent, determine the effectiveness of the work of both the Council and the United Nations as a whole for the foreseeable future.

Discussions on that extraordinarily sensitive issue have been taking place within an extremely complex and difficult framework. During the eight rounds of intergovernmental negotiations so far it has been possible to make some progress, but a universal decision that would satisfy all or at least the majority of Member States is, so far, not in sight. Russia favours making the Security Council more representative. However, efforts towards that end must not impede the ability of the Council to respond effectively and quickly to challenges as they arise. That is particularly relevant now, when we are witnessing an increase in conflict situations. It is obvious that, unless we preserve the compact nature of the Council, it will not be possible to guarantee the speed of its reactions. The membership of that body should not exceed slightly more than 20 members.

We favour further improvement of the working methods of the Security Council. We maintain our fundamental position, namely, that the Council is the master of its own working methods. We are convinced that work on this matter must be carried out in an atmosphere of transparency, taking into account the views of Member States and with the understanding that a reasonable balance must be maintained between transparency and effectiveness. Attempts to dismantle the reform package reflected in decision 62/557 are inadmissible. In any case, our priority is to enhance the ability of the Security Council to implement its prerogatives under the Charter in the maintenance of international peace and security.

For us, ideas that seek to impinge on the prerogatives of the present permanent members of the Security Council, including the historical institution of the veto, are unacceptable. It should be recalled that that mechanism is a most important instrument and a stimulus for Council members in their search for balanced decisions. Encroaching on that right would be an extremely rash step.

We support initiatives to step up the interaction between the Security Council and the General Assembly. We should not pull too tightly on the cord that links those two major organs, but rather focus on the areas in which real cooperation between them is not only possible, but indispensable. There are quite a few such areas. For example, let us take such relevant issues today as enhancing the effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping and peacebuilding. There is room there for joint activity and for taking decisions in the sphere of mediation to deal with problems facing the United Nations. The Security Council and the General Assembly can both make substantive contributions in that regard. The most important thing is for the cooperation between them to be conducted on the basis of respect for their existing prerogatives. To a great extent, that will determine the success of the reform.

We are convinced that the question of Security Council reform cannot be resolved arithmetically simply by putting various models to a vote subject to the minimum required two-thirds vote of the members of the General Assembly. A result achieved that way would hardly enhance the authority of the Security Council and would not serve to strengthen the world Organization. We also have doubts regarding the practice of establishing specific groups of States or associations of countries that try at any cost to expand their base of support for initiatives that they have put forward or, even more dangerously, to artificially force their implementation.

In that regard, we fully support what has been said here many times from this rostrum, namely, that the formula for Security Council reform must enjoy maximally broad support from the Members of the Organization. If it is not possible to achieve consensus here, then in any case it is politically imperative to guarantee the support of a significantly larger number of Member States than the legally required two-thirds majority of votes in the General Assembly.

We are ready to consider any reasonable option for expanding the membership of the Security Council. We cannot fail to recognize the existence of strong claims to permanent seats in the Security Council, but their number, as announced so far, already exceeds the maximum possible seats that have been proposed during the intergovernmental negotiations. What is also unclear is the algorithm for determining the number of specific possible permanent member countries in the event that a significant decision is adopted on the expansion of members of the Council in both categories. A solution to such a difficult headache could be, in our view, an interim compromise decision, which could satisfy the ambitions of the influential members of the international community who are trying to play a more active role in the Security Council and would not lead to a split in the General Assembly.

In any case, the most important thing is for the decision to be based on the broadest possible agreement within the United Nations. In the light of the above, we believe it would be useful to devote the next round of intergovernmental negotiations to a comparative analysis of the advantages of the basic formulas for Council reform and also to the problems linked to them. That would assist us in having a clearer view of all of the consequences of the implementation of the various models of reform.

So far, the course of the negotiations so far does not make it possible to say that we have come closer to working out a universal formula for Security Council reform that might enjoy maximum broad support. We see no alternative to continuing the painstaking work of bringing the negotiating parties closer together. We believe that the efforts of the President of the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly and the coordinator of the negotiations, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, will provide assistance in the negotiations, on the understanding that ownership of that process remains with the Member States themselves. We are convinced that the work must be conducted in a calm, transparent and inclusive manner, without imposing any kind of artificial time frames.

In conclusion, I would like, once again, to emphasize that progress and reform of the Security Council hinges solely on the political will of Member States and their readiness to achieve a reasonable compromise.

Mr. Sparber (Liechtenstein): Our collective failure to reform the Security Council is the single biggest piece of unfinished business. We have established a Human Rights Council and made it, over time, into the effective body it is today. We have created a Peacebuilding Commission, which, in spite of its weaknesses, fills a gap that existed in the institutional architecture of the United Nations. We have even made significant progress with respect to the implementation of the responsibility to protect, much as there is left to do in that regard. On Security Council reform, however, tangible progress remains elusive, let alone the comprehensive reform that we all agreed on over seven years ago.

Nobody underestimates the magnitude of the challenge we are facing, and there are good explanations as to why we have so far been unsuccessful. But the moment has long arrived when we have to ask ourselves whether we are indeed trying or just pretending to try. Most of the time, the latter seems the case, and we then must wonder whom we are trying to fool. We, as Member States, certainly know full well that the current process is not a genuine negotiation that can lead to a result. And, in fact, we all know that consensus with respect to Council reform can only mean very strong majorities that are also conducive to implementing the results — in the case of enlargement, a ratification process — but not necessarily unanimity. Let us face reality. For some — for too many, indeed — the commitment to reform has essentially been lip service. The discussions on draft resolution A/66/L.42/Rev.2, which we submitted last session (see A/66/PV.50) together with Costa Rica, Jordan, Singapore and Switzerland, starkly illustrated that fact.

We hope that this session will bring about different approaches and bolder attempts to advance the discussions. That would entail a more in-depth exploration of what has been called the intermediate model. As is well known, we put one such model forward ourselves, but given that some quite different notions have also been included under that heading, we have given it a new name that makes clear what the model actually is. It is an enlargement model that would create a new category of seats: long-term, renewable seats. States could thus serve de facto permanently on the Council, if re-elected, without the power of the veto. Six such new seats would be added, either combined with a number of new non-permanent seats or not, which would bring the total number of Council members to 21. That new composition would be subject to a review after 20 years, which would include questions such as the creation of new permanent seats, the exercise of the veto and other key aspects of the Council's work. That enlargement model has been on the table for quite some time, and we would be happy to engage in a substantive discussion on its parameters and in particular to compare it with other models that are currently presented as intermediate.

As important as enlargement is, there can clearly be no genuine reform of the Council without measures to make its work more transparent, accountable and legitimate. The consensus at the 2005 World Summit confirmed that understanding and gave all of us ownership over it. But we have failed to live up to that commitment. The two presidential notes adopted by the Council under the reference number 507 (S/2006/507 and S/2010/507) are a disappointing record of progress, in particular as the limited measures in those two documents have been inconsistently implemented and, depending on who dictates the flavour of the month in the Council, at times ignored. The circumstances under which the group of five small nations had to withdraw draft resolution A/66/L.42/Rev.2 at the last session of the Assembly speaks volumes about the lack of accountability that the draft resolution was trying to address. We are grateful for the strong support we were given in that effort and are committed to continuing our work to that end. Working methods are as important as enlargement, probably even more so, in order to genuinely make the Security Council a better organ.

What is more, we strongly believe that reform of the working methods is indispensable if there is to be an agreement on any possible enlargement model. There is not even a remote possibility of creating new veto powers — and Liechtenstein would not support such a proposal — or of eliminating the existing vetoes. In such a situation, at the least a very modest agreement on the use of the veto will be indispensable in order to move the enlargement effort forward. Ideally, that would precede an agreement on enlargement. Changes in the current practice of the use of the veto are an urgent imperative, as we have been reminded all too often in recent months.

Mr. Sangqu (South Africa): We commend the President of the Security Council for the month of November, Mr. Hardeep Singh Puri, Permanent Representative of India, for presenting the annual report of the Council (A/67/2) and the delegation of Colombia, under the leadership of Ambassador Néstor Osorio, for preparing it.

In October 2010, the General Assembly elected and mandated South Africa to serve as an elected member of the Security Council. Cognizant of the high responsibility that had been bestowed upon us, we have carried out that honourable task. As our term on the Security Council draws to an end, we come here today to report to the Member States that elected us to that body and to account and reflect on our contribution to and assessment of the work of the Security Council.

As an elected member of the Security Council, my delegation was acutely aware of the limitations that come with being a non-permanent member of that body, but we were determined to play a meaningful and active role in its affairs. In our experience, elected members of the Council are confronted by numerous constraints that result from the dominance, in the current configuration, of the non-elected permanent members. That dominance is experienced at the very start of one's tenure, when the five permanent members allocate the chairmanships of subsidiary bodies without themselves chairing any and with little or no consultation with the members concerned. It further permeates the daily work of the Council, as three of the permanent members are the penholders on almost every country-specific mandate on the Council's agenda. In addition, the resolutions or decisions of the Council are often drafted in small groups and presented as a fait accompli to the elected members. We support broad consultation by the Council, but its decisions should be open to debate among all its members.

Despite those limitations, we believe that we have delivered on the mandate given to us by that body, our subregion, the Southern African Development Community, and the African continent. South Africa used its comparative advantage, derived from our experience during our first tenure on the Council and our history of having been on the Council's agenda. In addition, our active work in peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding on the continent of Africa and beyond has equipped us to participate actively in the deliberations of the Council. We maintain that elected members often come to the Council with the necessary expertise and knowledge to provide benefits to its work.

The annual report of the Security Council before us indicates the many areas where the Council remains engaged in resolving conflicts all over the world, particularly in Africa. The transitions from conflict to peace in countries such as Somalia, the Sudan and Timor-Leste are testimony to what the Security Council can achieve when it assumes its Charter responsibilities. We are pleased that, during the reporting period, the Council has also stimulated constructive debates on key global issues, such as peacebuilding, the protection of civilians, women, peace and security, and children and armed conflict.

South Africa is particularly pleased with the enhanced strategic cooperation between the Peace and Security Council of the African Union (AU) and the Security Council. In that regard, South Africa piloted the adoption of resolution 2033 (2012), which was adopted during its presidency of the Security Council in January of this year and builds on resolution 1809 (2008), which was adopted during its presidency in April 2008. The aims of those resolutions are to promote greater strategic coordination between the two bodies, to secure predictable and sustainable funding for AU peacekeeping operations and to support post-conflict reconstruction and development on the continent.

The positive impact of that strategic coordination is evidenced by the subsequent adoption of resolution 2046 (2012) on the Sudan and South Sudan, in which the AU Peace and Security Council road map for dealing with the outstanding Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) and post-secession issues was endorsed by the Security Council. The ongoing consultations between the Council and the AU High-level Implementation Panel, which is playing a leadership role in resolving post-CPA issues, continue to benefit the Council as it addresses those matters. That strategic coordination was rewarded when the two parties, which were almost on the brink of war, signed a cooperation agreement on 27 September that dealt with all outstanding issues.

With regard to Somalia, we recall the meeting of the Security Council on 11 January, under South Africa's presidency of the Council, in which the President of the AU Peace and Security Council participated, as well as States members of the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, culminating in the adoption of resolution 2036 (2012), which authorized an increase in the troop levels of the African Union Military Observer Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). That landmark resolution and the increase in AMISOM's troop levels severely disrupted Al-Shabaab, thus creating a security environment conducive to ending the political transition phase in Somalia and culminating in the recent election of the new President and Cabinet.

South Africa is pleased that the annual consultations between the Security Council and the AU Peace and Security Council have become more structured and effective. In that regard, we are of the view that greater strategic coordination between the United Nations and the AU will enhance the effectiveness of the Security Council in addressing challenges to peace and security on the continent of Africa. We are confident that that continued cooperation and unity between the two Councils could be of immense benefit in addressing the challenges that we face in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Mali and the wider Sahel region.

Despite those positive developments, my delegation remains concerned about the tendency in certain cases where the Security Council is selective in picking those elements of decisions taken by regional organizations that advance the national interest of some members. Such selectivity and double standards were visibly demonstrated when the AU's road map for Libya was undermined and ignored by the implementers of resolution 1973 (2011). Furthermore, the views of the League of Arab States on the Palestinian question have been conveniently ignored, while its views on Libya and Syria have been fully endorsed. It is important that the principle of subsidiarity be respected, if we are to establish better synergies in enhancing cooperation, especially on the African continent. We therefore call for greater consistency on the part of the Council in engaging with regional bodies.

We remain concerned that the Security Council has not succeeded in bringing about any positive change in the situation between Israel and Palestine. The failure of the Council to find a lasting solution to that crisis has denied the hopes of millions of Palestinians and Israelis. We also regret that the Council has delegated its responsibility to the Quartet, which has been moribund in its handling of that issue. South Africa is most disappointed that the Security Council could not reach consensus on supporting Palestine's bid for membership of the General Assembly or on visiting Palestine. In our view, the Council's failure to act on that matter contributes to the continued instability in the region, thereby giving rise to the tragic events of the past few days in Gaza that we all have witnessed.

We remain convinced that the credibility of the Security Council will continue to be challenged as long as the human rights of Palestinians and the people of the Western Sahara are ignored, which has been the case for decades. That harms the credibility of the Council as a guardian of international peace and security.

The past year has seen more improvement of the working methods of the Council. An encouraging development has been the use of informal interactive dialogues, which has allowed the Council to interact informally with individual Member States, the Peacebuilding Commission and subregional and regional organizations. A further improvement in the Council's working methods can be seen in the fact that elected members have been designated to serve as penholders, as with Germany on Afghanistan and South Africa on Timor-Leste, and have also become leaders or co-leaders during Security Council missions to countries on the Council's agenda. Under Portugal's able chairmanship, the Working Group on Documentation and Other Procedural Questions has actively promoted greater transparency and efficiency in the Council's work. Addressing such issues — penholders, the chairing of subsidiary bodies, the preparation of the annual report and monthly assessments — has led to modest but meaningful steps towards improving the Council's work.

We welcome such positive developments and encourage the Security Council to defend the significant advances made and to pursue further improvements. However, we reiterate the view that cosmetic changes to the working methods are not an adequate response to the need for fundamental reform of the Council and expansion of its membership in both the permanent and the non-permanent categories.

Reform of the Security Council remains one of the most urgent challenges facing the United Nations today. We welcome the President's promise to assist Member States in working towards the revitalization of the General Assembly, including through the reform process. We hope that reform process will not be treated as merely one of many issues for consideration but that it will be seen in the way that the vast majority of Member States see it, namely, a priority whose urgency cannot be overstated. We wish to express our pleasure at the reappointment of Ambassador Zahir Tanin, the Permanent Representative of Afghanistan, as facilitator of the intergovernmental negotiations. We have confidence in his leadership, and we assure him and the President of the Assembly of our full support as we try to make progress in the negotiations.

After many a high and low, we find ourselves today in need of a breakthrough in order to recapture the momentum of 2009 and reinvigorate the intergovernmental negotiations. My delegation is concerned about the fact that, since the launch of intergovernmental negotiations in February 2009, we have relapsed into the open-ended working group mode of restating positions. We are convinced that the current text before us, while a useful reference document for the positions of Member States and groups of States, cannot help nudge us towards concrete results. What is needed is a process or initiative that can lead towards convergence. We believe that the various exchanges in the eighth round of negotiations have highlighted areas where convergences and compromises may lie, and that, in the main, the majority of States and groups of States are calling for expansion in both categories. The African Group and the group associated with draft resolution A/61/L.69/Rev.2, to which we belong, share that view.

The call for expansion in both categories is based on our belief that the fundamental objective of the reform is to ensure that the Council, consistent with the Charter values of universalism, collective responsibility, fairness and equity, is broadly representative and reflects the current state of world affairs. Those values would be inconsistent with a Security Council in which Africa remained unrepresented in the permanent category. In that regard, we call on the facilitator to produce a shorter text based on the positions of the overwhelming majority of Member States. We would encourage the facilitator to be guided, in producing that text, by his own assessment that expansion in both categories enjoys the support of the majority of Member States.

Discussions on the reform of the Security Council have gone on much too long. Now is the time to show that we are all committed to giving effect to the call of our leaders in the 2005 World Summit final document (resolution 60/1) for fundamental reform. It is our collective responsibility to conclude those negotiations in a just and expeditious manner.

Mr. Haniff (Malaysia): I would like to express my appreciation to the President for convening today's meeting to further elaborate on and take stock of what we have achieved in the eight rounds of discussions on the question of equitable representation on and increase in the membership of the Security Council. Malaysia associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Egypt on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement. I would like to limit my statement to discussing the issue of reform of the Security Council, which appears as agenda item 117 in the Assembly's programme of work.

We term the discussions a negotiating process, but we all know that what we are dealing with are not negotiations as we normally conduct them at the United Nations. No negotiations have actually been carried out. We have had statement-reading sessions, but hardly constitutes a negotiating process. We nonetheless continue to meet, although deep down we may quietly admit that the process is substantially where it was 20 years ago. The eight meetings we have had on the issues of the Security Council's working methods and its expansion have brought us no closer to a reformed Council. In some ways, in fact, we have drifted further apart than we were 20 years ago. We have groups and Member States that have openly stated that they want the Council to be expanded and its working methods improved, but we now see bilateral and regional rivalries coming into play. We cannot even agree on what an expanded Security Council should look like.

That was evident last year, when a draft resolution of one operative paragraph that sought to expand the membership of the Security Council, a subject on which all Member States claimed to agree, did not even see the light of day in the Assembly (A/66/L.42/Rev.2). The whole thing has become a zero-sum game. The opinion seems to be: "If I cannot make it into the Council, that other Member State should not be allowed to become a permanent member". I hear subtle voices saying, in effect, "Let us prolong these discussions without reaching any decision, as I stand to lose if country X becomes a permanent member". Then we hear the same voices asking why the reform process is slow. I am amazed and puzzled.

Most Member States profess to want a more transparent, inclusive and engaging Security Council. Almost all present here today would agree that the veto power is, without a doubt, undemocratic and morally unjustified. The irony is that, while we claim to be champions of democracy worldwide, some of us prefer an authoritarian model when it comes to the work of the Security Council. We have also heard suggestions that, while the veto is bad, new permanent members should not be denied the right to such powers. We have heard a lot of hype about improving the Council's working methods, but when we met in this Hall last May, we were told that the draft resolution on the subject had been withdrawn (see A/66/PV.108).

Let us ask ourselves: Are we really serious about wanting Security Council reform, or do we just want to seem politically correct, which is why we continue to mislead the world by claiming that we want reform of that important organ of the United Nations? It is time for us to re-examine our real intentions and to work positively to help the process move forward. In that connection, for example, while we complain that the United Nations asks too much from Member States for the financing of its operations, we, the Member States, are sometimes to blame for higher operational costs. The 20-year discussion of Security Council reform, to which there seems to be no end, is a clear example of how we have contributed to an increase in United Nations operating costs.

Where do we go from here? We can continue to pretend that we are in a negotiating process. We can meet once every two or three months to read statements prepared only so as to announce our individual views, and in the process we might ridicule the ideas of other parties. We can continue to take an all-or-nothing approach, as has been done for 20 years. We can also continue to intimidate smaller countries in the discussions and then to claim that all Member States have equal rights in this most democratic Assembly. To be politically correct, we should also continue telling the world that we want to reform the Security Council, even though deep down we know that is not what we actually want, and that we will take every possible step — political, legal and technical — to stall the whole process and then blame other parties for their being inflexible.

By the way, the word "flexibility" has taken on a new meaning in our discussions. It effectively means: "You should agree with what I said and abandon your position". We can all agree that such shortcomings are making it much more difficult for any forward motion in the process to be achieved by Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Permanent Representative of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and chair of the intergovernmental negotiations on the equitable representation and increase in the membership of the Security Council and other matters related to the Council. While I mention him, I wish to congratulate Ambassador Tanin on his reappointment as chair.

In closing, I reiterate that we should start genuine negotiations, with a workable text and reasonable timelines for the process to conclude. We have tried compilation texts in the past. That did not get us anywhere. It is time for all of us — especially the majority of members who currently have little or no say at all in matters related to the maintenance of international peace and security — to drop the all-or-nothing approach, and to not only talk about flexibility but prove that we possess it. Those of us who are part of that majority stand to lose in the current stalemate. We can continue in what is a political charade of the highest order, or we can choose to start real negotiations, with a reasonable timeline for their conclusion. Until such time, we have only ourselves to blame for our inability to play a more meaningful role in the work of the Security Council.

Malaysia sincerely hopes that we will achieve some progress as we continue to deliberate on that important issue during the current session of the General Assembly. Otherwise, we will just keep repeating ourselves.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.